



Nordregio

# Policies and measures for speeding up labour market integration of refugees in the Nordic region

A knowledge Overview

Anna Karlsdóttir, Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir,  
Åsa Ström Hildestrand & Alex Cuadrado

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Nordregio  
P.O. Box 1658  
SE-111 86 Stockholm, Sweden  
nordregio@nordregio.se  
www.nordregio.org  
www.norden.org

Analyses and text: Anna Karlsdóttir, Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir,  
Åsa Ström Hildestrand & Alex Cuadrado

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project *[Nordic collaboration for integration of refugees and migrants](#)*

## **Nordregio**

is a leading Nordic and European research centre for regional development and planning, established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1997. We conduct solution-oriented and applied research, addressing current issues from both a research perspective and the viewpoint of policymakers and practitioners. Operating at the international, national, regional and local levels, Nordregio's research covers a wide geographic scope, with an emphasis on the Nordic and Baltic Sea Regions, Europe and the Arctic.

## **The Nordic co-operation**

*Nordic co-operation* is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. *Nordic co-operation* has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe. *Nordic co-operation* seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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is a forum of co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

## **The Nordic Council**

is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiative s and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

Stockholm, Sweden, 2017

# Foreword

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It takes on average five to ten years for a refugee to find work in the Nordic countries. As social inclusion is closely linked to successful labour market integration, and as during this period the refugee represents a cost to society, the question of how to ensure access to the labour market has been a prominent issue on the political agenda. Since the countries show both differences and similarities in their migration policies and practical solutions, the question is how we can learn from each other.

In 2016 the Nordic Council of Ministers initiated a co-operation programme designed to support the national efforts on integration of refugees and immigrants. The Nordic Welfare Centre has the overall responsibility for the main project "Nordic collaboration on integration of refugees and migrants" in close collaboration with Nordregio. The aim of the project is to serve as an idea bank on the integration area, to map out existing knowledge and research, and to expand our common knowledge base on integration.

This report was produced by Nordregio on behalf of the Nordic Welfare Centre and is the result of a comparative study of policies and measures in place in the countries for achieving more efficient labour market integration of refugees. The scope of the report has been to focus on four aspects:

1. To what extent are practices of the early mapping of competences in place in each country - and what are the results so far?
2. How do the countries validate the work experience and qualifications of refugees – and

what are the effects of validation for labour market entry?

3. How is language education combined with vocational training for faster integration into the labour market?

4. The role of civil society and informal networks in the integration process: Current status and untapped potential?

The report reveals a common understanding of important elements for sound integration into the labour market. The countries' policies include early language training, competence mapping, skills assessment as well as recognition of foreign credentials and job search assistance and mentoring. Strategies and policies are illustrated by best practice initiatives, aimed to facilitate employment and to promote social inclusion based on evidence and expert assessments.

Although the report reveals a high degree of consensus on key elements for a successful integration, several challenges remain. The major risk of alienation still lies in the gap between those who have work and those who do not. Even if full integration of refugees is demanding and difficult to define, a less comprehensive and less ambitious approach will inevitably expose the countries in risk of long term integration failure, with large consequences both on a personal level and for the societies. Our hope is that the report provides a sound basis for discussions on solutions to both contemporary and forthcoming challenges.

**Ewa Persson Göransson**  
Director  
Nordic Welfare Centre

**Kjell Nilsson**  
Director  
Nordregio

*For more information on the project Nordic collaboration on integration of refugees and migrants, please refer to: [www.integrationnorden.org](http://www.integrationnorden.org).*

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# Summary

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**The employment gap** between refugees and the native-born population in the Nordic countries has been highlighted by numerous studies, as has the large variety in the extent of the gap based on country of origin. Studies of earlier migrant cohorts show that the chance of being unemployed decreases over time and it takes on average 5-10 years for people to become fully employed. The integration process is slower for women, with low levels of education and family conditions, including child care, having a substantial impact. With respect to the most recent wave of refugees arriving in 2015, primarily from Syria and Afghanistan, research has yet to determine the effectiveness of the new measures which have been used in an attempt to close this gap in years to come. The fact that Sweden has the smallest share of low-qualified or simple jobs (5.2%) in the EU28 is a factor, together with labour market policies and regulations.

**Early competence mapping** is now occurring at the asylum stage in all the Nordic countries (except Iceland). In Denmark, Norway and Sweden this mapping focuses on language and other skills or experience of relevance to labour market participation. A recent shift in approach to early competence mapping is evident, for example, testing of new methods for evaluating refugees' qualifications. New digital platforms allowing refugees to undertake a skills self-assessment when registering are being trialled in Norway and Sweden, but their long-term effects are yet to be seen. Recent evaluation of the Danish model of personal interviews have shown improved results. In Finland, the competence-mapping process is under reform and will be systematically implemented in 2018. While countries are pre-occupied with making the process more efficient (see Jönsson, 2017), less emphasis has been placed on the perspective of individual needs, which vary from group to group.

**Validation of skills, qualifications and experience (including non-formal and informal learning)** is under reform in most Nordic countries and, as such, their success is yet to be evaluated. However, practices of referring validations (i.e.

through transfer schemes between different agents in the system), as well as employers' needs, need to be coordinated to secure its effect. While in Norway validation processes have focused on low-skilled workers, the Swedish approach utilises a fast-track method targeted at those with higher qualifications. Testing new methods of validation and addressing rigidity between institutions at various administrative levels is likely to be key to making processes faster and more effective for the benefit of both refugees themselves and for the Nordic economies.

**Language learning as part of effective long-term integration and faster labour market** integration is offered in each country for varied periods of time. Sweden is an exception here, with no time constraints on access to language courses (see table 4, p. 28). There are some indications that the requirements of language courses are, in some cases, inconsistent with the needs of the labour market. More targeted approaches which combine the development of language skills with other professional skills and on-the-job training, as well as modular courses, have demonstrated better results. All countries are currently experimenting with new education models, seeking to improve the link between language learning and employment. For example, regionally developed courses tailored to local labour-market needs. The Swedish SFI (Svenska för Invandrare) model has been criticised, with several studies finding the quality of the courses to be low and highly variable between cities. Retention rates are also a concern.

A myriad of new **labour market measures** are being taken at the regional and municipal level. There is however scope for employers to become more engaged. Women are still left behind in most Nordic countries when it comes to labour-market integration. In Sweden, this has recently been prioritised and Arbetsförmedlingen/AF will make it a focus in the coming years.

**Social networks** are considered crucial for accessing jobs in the Nordic countries, both for immigrants and in general. Despite this, studies focusing specifically on the role of social networks in facilitating labour market entry for

refugees are limited. More general studies find that informal channels remain an important pathway to employment and that many jobs are never advertised publicly. Lack of networks has been described as the greatest obstacle for foreign academics when it comes to finding a job that is well-aligned with their competence and skills. Evidence shows higher employment rates among immigrants who have native-born friends and those who are involved in voluntary organisations. In Norway, getting involved in civil society organisations (CSOs) and leisure activities is also a commonly used tactic among the native-born population for getting to know people when moving to a new place within the country. The county administrations, The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), and SKL, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, are all aware of the important role

CSOs play in successful integration and local inclusion. Alongside services, these organisations provide meeting points, creating opportunities for refugees to become more actively involved in their communities. Facilitating meetings between refugees and existing residents is a valuable way of working against discrimination, demonstrating that integration is actually a two-way process. Civil society plays a vital role in the integration process and greater emphasis should be placed on its inclusion in integration procedures.

Factors to secure faster and more successful integration are discussed in more depth at the conclusion of this knowledge overview on page 37.

**Gaps in research** still exist with respect to measuring the qualitative effects of official labour market integration programmes, validation measures and other courses and subsidies.

# 1. Introduction

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This report is the result of a comparative study of policies and measures in place in the Nordic countries for achieving swifter labour market integration of refugees. There are many factors that affect refugees' prospects of finding work. The scope of this report has been to focus on four aspects that have been receiving greater attention lately:

1. To what extent are practices of the early mapping of competences in place in each country - and what are the results so far?
2. How do the countries validate the work experience and qualifications of refugees - and what are the effects of validation for labour market entry?
3. How is language education combined with vocational training for faster integration into the labour market?
4. The role of civil society and informal networks in the integration process: current status and untapped potential?

We aim to summarise research and knowledge on the measures in place and the challenges facing refugees seeking employment on the labour markets in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark that still exist at the following levels:

- a) Summarising in a non-technical way main the findings of existing European and Nordic economic and social science research.
- b) Summarising the results of public agencies' reports and evaluations on relevant policy measures and reforms, focussing on good practice and the remaining challenges.

Greenland and Faroe Islands are not included within our focus group, but the Kingdom of Denmark is in its entirety.

The target group that we focus on in this comparative analysis is adult refugees between 20 and 65 years of age who have been granted residence as refugees, quota refugees and families in need of protection. The large number of refugees in recent years has pushed the issue of immigration

and integration into the forefront of public policy debates in the Nordic countries (Harbo, Heleniak and Hildestrand, 2017). The most advanced integration instruments for humanitarian migrants in Europe have been developed in the Scandinavian countries. This typically consists of structured labour market training and support within programs that generally last between two and three years (OECD, 2016). The question is, why do we still have persistent employment gaps in the Nordic countries? How can these programmes become more effective? Or do they need to be complemented by other measures?

A higher level of education improves employment prospects everywhere, both for immigrants and non-migrants. However, immigrants with higher education struggle more in finding a high-skilled job than their indigenous peers. The main obstacles are language skills and getting their credentials recognised. In the case of immigrants with a low level of education, the picture is different and varies by region. In the European Union, the average employment rate among refugees is comparable to their native-born peers – and higher if we look at the OECD. However, several countries stand out as having a different outcome: The Netherlands, Estonia and Northern Europe, where refugees struggle more in the labour market than the indigenous population, regardless of their level of education (OECD, 2015).

In recent years (2016 and 2017), numerous reports and evaluations covering issues relevant to this knowledge overview have been published in the EU and by the OECD. Below we highlight a few important findings.

## 1.1 Findings from European studies

Early assessment of skills is needed for asylum seekers with a good prospect of staying in the host country. For them, it is particularly important to ease labour market access (European Commission, 2016a; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; OECD, 2016). Given that work experience is crucial, it should have priority among support measures, even over more extensive language courses or vocational training (see, for example, Martín et al, 2016).

Social actors, i.e. unions and employer

organisations, play an active role in most of the destination countries when it comes to providing education, training positions, apprenticeships and other means of accelerating labour market access, including the recruitment of refugees. The Swedish fast-tracks that will be described later are one example of this engagement. Social actors often stress the desirability of sustainable and fast labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. While employers want to boost their competitiveness by using the new labour resources efficiently, trade unions tend to emphasise sustainable integration to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live and work within a country over the long term. There is a need to find the right balance between fast and sustainable integration. Integration plans should be realistic: low-skilled jobs may come first (for initial work experience), but career paths should be offered for more sustainable integration (Eurofound 2016).

## 1.2 Recent Pan-Nordic studies

Not many Pan-Nordic studies on labour market integration of refugees have yet been published. However, four recent publications are worth referring to. First, NordForsk (2017) commissioned a report based on interviews and a survey among Nordic experts on migration and integration, addressing the need to learn more about the everyday lives of migrants in order to be able to define better goals for integration policy. Research is needed to get empirical evidence on how and where people meet and form new networks and how this affects immigrants' well-being, avenues for shared value creation and the strengthening and maintenance of social cohesion and shared value creation (Pyrhönen et.al, 2017).

*"Without fine-grained and harmonized assessment of how various policies impact specific migrant groups and cohorts, we lack the capacity to compare experiences across the Nordic countries and produce synthesizing reports of how immigrants can be more efficiently and permanently integrated to labor markets"* (Pyrhönen et.al, 2017, p.37). The author also finds it necessary to explore the divergent impact that labour market regulations and integration policies have on migrants of different backgrounds, instead of having the focus on the fiscal impact of migrants' unemployment. The experts surveyed encourage policymakers to reconsider what is counted as successful labour market integration. If the benchmarking is only

against the indigenous population, it will be an endless story of failure. Still, the discussion on how to incentivise migrants to take entry-level jobs needs to consider Nordic political realities, public opinion and trade union involvement, which render the notion of creating a class of the working poor unfeasible (Pyrhönen et.al, 2017).

This year, the annual **Nordic Economic Policy Review** was also devoted to the employment of immigrants in the Nordic region through country-specific articles written by renowned Nordic economists (Nordic Economic Policy Review, 2017). The Norwegian study explains causes of the employment gap, especially for women, as being educational attainment. Refugee women with Norwegian upper secondary education have an employment rate that is 27% higher than refugee women without a Norwegian education. As in other Nordic countries, employment rates tend to start very low and increase over time. The pattern is different for men and women. For men, it grows fast but declines after five years, while for women, it grows more slowly and stabilises at a lower rate (Bratsberg et.al, 2017).

In Denmark, business cycle fluctuations seem to have a greater effect on the employment of both refugees and family reunited with immigrants, when compared to the indigenous population. For women, having small children has a negative effect on their labour market participation (Schultz-Nielsen et.al, 2017). In Finland, the composition of refugees in terms of countries of origin seems to be the main factor explaining the employment gap. In this study, integration was revealed through the lens of refugees' earnings from employment compared with social benefits, based on data for the age group between 25 and 60 who immigrated after 18 years old. The findings show a sharp divide between men and women for all refugee groups (lower for women) (Sarvimäki, 2017).

The Swedish study focused on young people between 20-29 years old and their first real job in the period 1990-2014. It reveals that young people enter the labour market somewhat faster than refugees on average. The time of arrival and business cycle conditions affect progress in the early years and country of origin seems to influence both how long it takes refugees to get their first job and their labour market entry in general (Åslund et.al, 2017). Another study from Sweden shows that the socio-economic status and poverty are the biggest factors explaining both attainment



and gaps between refugees and non-refugees (Grönqvist and Niknami, 2017). The NEPR paper analyses whether lower employment benefits for refugees have an adverse impact on the integration of their children in terms of educational attainment. It shows no clear correlation, but does show a link between parental human capital and the human capital of their children. Moreover, this also depends on country of origin where children of Afghan refugee parents do better in the education system (in terms of grades) than refugees from Iraq and Somalia (Jakobsen et.al, 2017).

Rambøll consultant's bureau prepared a "notat" for the Nordic Council of Ministers on labour integration measures in the Scandinavian countries in 2017, and Denmark Statistics published a paper on the employment gap (Bjerre, Mortensen &

Drescher, 2016). These documents have been very helpful for our task and are referred to later in the text.

Many believe that there is a big difference in integration policies between the Scandinavian countries and Finland. This is no longer true, even if this had applied in the 1990s when Denmark started highlighting obligations towards newly arrived refugees (ForskerZonen, 2015; Nordic Labour Journal, 2017). All the Nordic countries' integration programmes and establishment structures aim to enable and demand that refugees become active citizens. All four countries besides Denmark have an approach that focuses individually on integration, where Denmark has family considerations also involved in the process.

**Table 1. Integration support for asylum seekers in Scandinavian countries 2015**

	<b>Labour market access</b>	<b>Language training</b>	<b>Adult education combined with long-term language training</b>	<b>Skills assessment</b>	<b>Civic education</b>	<b>Job-related training</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Finland</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No (but planned)	Yes	No
<b>Norway</b>	Yes (but several formal requirements)	Yes	No/Yes	In progress	Yes	No
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes (only for asylum seekers with valid IDs)	Yes	No	No	No	No

Source: OECD 2016 (based on OECD questionnaires 2015), Eurofound 2016, table 12.

## 2. Characteristics of the Nordic employment gap

Compared to the OECD average, the Nordic countries show considerable employment gaps between the indigenous and foreign-born population, especially non-Western immigrants from a refugee background. The gaps are similar and narrow over time, but the employment rate of non-Western immigrants is lower in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden. In Finland, there is a big difference between immigrants and refugees of different origin. As an example, immigrants from the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia and Turkey have an employment rate of between 52 and 58%, while Immigrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia show employment rates between 20 and 26%. (Sarvimäki, 2017). This is a problem, especially since non-Western immigrants count for a significant part of the total immigrant population in the Scandinavian countries: 34% in Norway, 42% in Denmark and 48% in Sweden. Most of them come from Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Syria, Thailand and Turkey (ibid, 2017).

There are many reasons why immigrants face hurdles on the labour market compared to the indigenous population: foreign language, foreign education, lack of network and lack of local knowledge may all cause hindrances over time (Hagelund and Kavli, 2017). The employment gap between the indigenous population and immigrants is particularly wide in the first years after arrival, but refugees continue to lag behind even after several years. Many lack formal skills relevant to the local labour market, and traditional gender roles among immigrants can sometimes add to the problem (Djuve and Kavli, 2015).

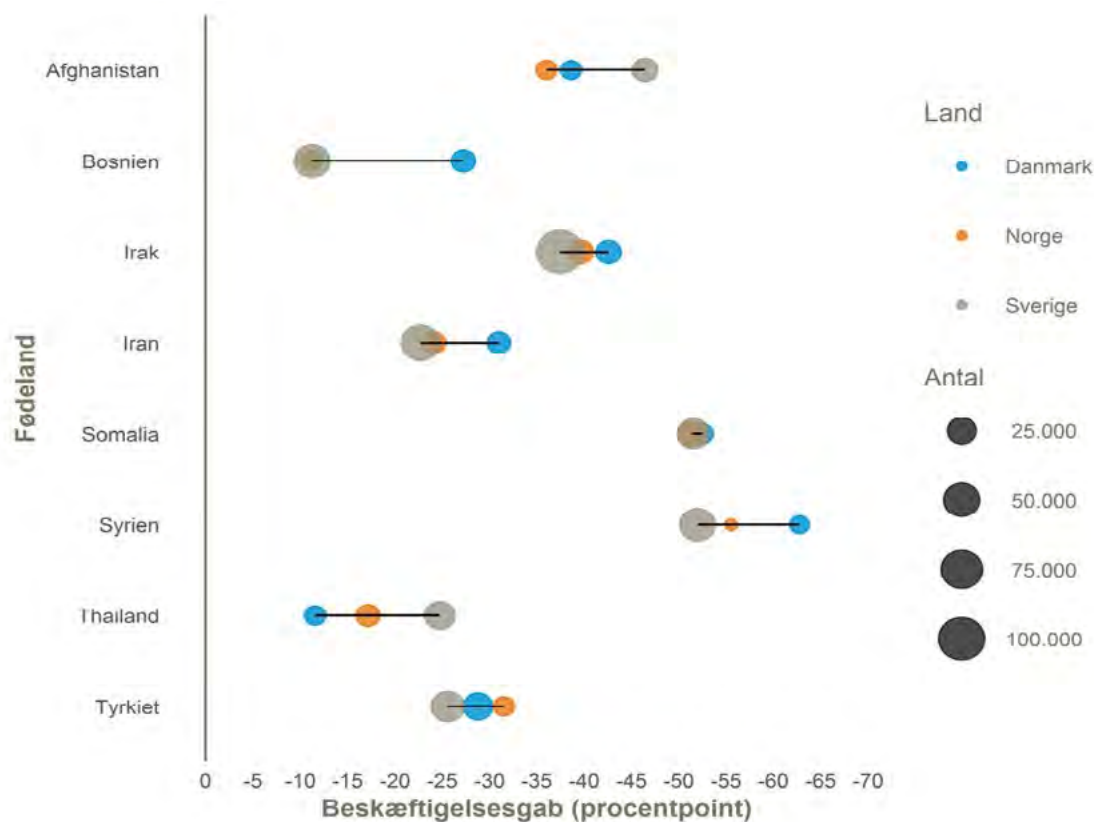
The employment gap can be depicted as in the picture below (Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher, 2016). The vertical line with the value zero represents employment among the native-born. The closer the point for a given group is to this line, the lower the employment gap.

The figure above indicates that Denmark, Sweden and Norway could do more to speed up the labour market integration of the foreign



*Picture by Yadid Levy/Norden.org.*

**Figur 2** Beskæftigelsesgab mellem indlandsfødte og udlandsfødte mellem 20 og 64 år. 2014



Anm.: Kategorien "Antal" angiver antallet af personer fra de udvalgte indvandringslande. Tallene er standardiseret for køn og alder med den indlandsfødte befolkning som reference.

**Picture 1. Employment gaps in Scandinavia between indigenous groups and selected groups of the foreign born, 2014. (Source: Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher 2016).**

born, especially refugees (Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher 2016). Generally, the employment gap decreases with time as the immigrants adapt to the new country, but this varies by refugee group. The figure shows a huge employment gap between Iranians and native born in Sweden and in Denmark in the first ten years after arrival, but then it decreases. The development is different for Iraqis where the gap does not close after ten years (Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher, 2016).

IFAU (Institutet för arbetsmarknads- och utbildningspolitisk utvärdering, hereafter IFAU) in Sweden has done many studies on the entry and status of immigrants on the Swedish labour market. Over just a couple of generations, Sweden has become multicultural. In 1930, 1% of the population was foreign born, a proportion that went up to 17% in 2015 (IFAU, 2017). Initially, this was caused by large-scale labour migration, resulting in higher employment rates among migrants than the indigenous population. In

the 1970s and 1980s, this meant a gradual shift towards more refugee migration which, together with an economic slowdown, caused a growing employment gap. In their most recent report, IFAU states that the pace of labour market integration of non-Western migrants is slow but steady. After 5 years in Sweden, approximately 50% have a job and after 15 years, around 80% have a job. Local and national unemployment rates have an impact on the pace, as well as education level upon arrival, age, gender and country of origin. For example, former Yugoslavians were integrated faster than Iraqis, people with secondary education had a faster pace, as well as men in general compared to women (IFAU, 2017).

**Refugee women** in general integrate more slowly than men for various reasons, e.g. lower education levels and less work experience upon arrival, plus they take more responsibility for children and family management (AF, 2017a). In addition to lack of formal skills, traditional

gender roles can be an additional barrier to labour market participation. Women who have migrated for humanitarian reasons have particularly low employment rates (Djuve and Kavli, 2015; Eide, Homme, Karlsen and Lundberg, December 2016). To promote women's participation and avoid traditional gender roles affecting participation, the Norwegian Introductory Programme (NIP) is designed so that every person in the household is entitled to introductory benefits. The purpose is twofold: to provide a direct link between participation and benefit payments and to encourage a full-time presence (illegitimate absences are deducted from the benefits), which in turn should result in a higher employment level for women (Djuve and Kavli, 2015). Nevertheless, gender-based differences in labour market participation occur in many places. Aure (2013) describes the Tromsø labour market as one example, highly dependent on gendered organisation of households, where a gendered expectation of motherhood is cumbersome. Having children, long parental leave and family obligations have moved highly skilled migrant women (as well as men) further away from the skilled labour market, at a time when they could have established themselves as professionals.

#### **Main reasons for the persistent employment gap in Sweden** (summarised by Delmi, 2015, and AF, 2017)

- Being a refugee is a weaker starting point than being a labour migrant.
- Foreign human capital: lacking competences that are vital in Sweden, notably Swedish.
- Weak social networks that can lead to work.
- High qualifications required for most jobs. Sweden has the lowest proportion of low-skilled jobs in the entire EU of 28 at 5.2%. (Fores 2016, p 22). Today 48% of refugees have only nine years of schooling or fewer.
- High minimum wages compared to other OECD countries – and stricter regulations (LAS) as well as high degree of unionisation which protects those already employed (Fores, 2016).
- Discrimination against non-Western migrants and non-Swedish qualifications/degrees
- Poor health is more common among refugees than others.
- Lack of housing/poor living conditions makes it harder to find a home where there is work.
- An additional factor is the possible side-effect of the new migration law, stipulating that no permanent residence permits will be granted unless the refugee has found permanent work. This gives incentives for finding a low-skilled job fast rather than educating yourself and finding a better job later (AF, 2017a). Waste of talent and poorer matching could be the result.

### 3. Early mapping of competences

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As mentioned earlier, evidence shows that there is a challenge with the employability of non-Western migrants in all the Nordic countries (Rambøll, 2017). Many newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers have low levels of qualifications and skills (Martín et.al, 2016), e.g. in Sweden, 48% of those newly arrived have 9 years of schooling or fewer (AF, 2017a). A brand-new report from the Swedish Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) shows a positive development regarding immigrants' labour market participation. Employment rates have increased and have not been higher since 2005. Nevertheless, the level of unemployment remains high, partly due to the fact that many participants in the introductory programme (etableringsprogrammet) are far removed from the labour market (Arbetsförmedlingen, October 2017). Although no general conclusions can be drawn (EMN, 2016), there is a variation mainly with countries of origin. Lack of knowledge of the host country's language is a key barrier to accessing the labour market, hence language training and other support measures should be offered as early as possible (European Commission, 2016a; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; OECD, 2016). Efforts to get an overview of the formal and informal competences refugees possess are also important, preferably at the asylum stage (Rambøll, 2017).

Common to the early mapping of competences in Denmark, Norway and Sweden is also the focus on language and other relevant skills or experience that can be applied to labour practices and activities. A recent shift in approach to early competence mapping is evident, i.e. by testing new methods of evaluating qualifications for refugees. NOKUT is running a pilot project which is based on the European Qualifications Passport method for refugees. The method was presented to the European Commission and other international organisations in 2015 and has, since 2016, been piloted as a Norwegian version in Norway (Malgina and Skjerven, 2016). Norway and Sweden are both making efforts to develop IT tools for the refugees

to submit information about themselves and their competences.

Local labour market conditions on arrival are crucial in determining permanent integration (Åslund and Roth 2007). Denmark, Finland and Sweden are among the few OECD countries that have incorporated employment-related elements into their dispersal schemes for humanitarian migrants (Tanay & Peschner, 2016). Although in Sweden, the so-called EBO law stipulates that refugees and asylum seekers can live wherever they like if they can arrange housing for themselves. This makes planning much more difficult for the authorities.



*Picture by Mostphotos.*



There is a delicate balance to be struck between the goal of settling humanitarian migrants evenly across the country and within regions and that of permanent labour market integration. Evidence from Denmark and Sweden suggests that when the design of humanitarian migrant dispersal policies overlooks employment-related factors, migrants' employment prospects may be badly affected and they may have to put up with lower employment rates and wages for many years after initial settlement (Damm and Rosholm, 2005; Edin et.al, 2004; Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher 2016).

To make better use of the human capital of humanitarian migrants and to ensure that integration pathways meet their individual needs, it is essential to take stock of the skills that they bring with them. To that end, it is important that their foreign qualifications and skills are assessed and recognized swiftly and effectively and, if needed, alternative assessment methods should be used, especially in cases when there is no documentation or proof of qualifications available. All three Scandinavian countries have special RPL procedures (recognition of prior learning) for refugees with no documentary proof of their qualifications (OECD, 2016).

### 3.1 Denmark

Denmark revised its integration policies in 2016 with the aim of easing faster labour market integration with two agreements. One agreement is between the state government and the coalition of municipalities (KL) and the other is between the state government, employers and unions in the country. As in the other Scandinavian countries, there has been an ongoing debate about lack of success in integrating refugee cohorts of the labour market (Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher, 2016; KORA, 2016; Arendt et.al, 2016a).

The employment gap is highlighted by an analysis comparing the employment effects of certain refugee groups published by the statistical analytical unit at Statistics Denmark (Bjerre, Mortensen & Drescher, 2016). Refugees born in Iran, Iraq, and Syria are less well integrated into the labour market in Denmark than in other Nordic countries and less integrated than other immigrant groups. There is a significant employment gap for those groups. In all the Scandinavian countries, the employment gap is biggest for refugees born in Somalia and Syria (see picture 1). Denmark can improve integration for the refugees from the four

countries by an increase of several percentage points with an increase in employment affiliations if they were comparable to Sweden or Norway.

The mapping of competences in Denmark usually starts with validation of education or informal competences in the attempt to identify relevant municipalities for housing the refugees according to the labour market demand for the competences. Mapping itself is carried out in interviews with individuals (and families), starting at the asylum centres and a range of licensed asylum operators from the immigration authorities (Red Cross and a number of municipalities). The recently established Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education (January 2017) operates a hotline that can advise those assessing refugees and asylum seekers on their educational merits and competences. This process is designed to be quick and the management of each case should only take a couple of working days (Uddannelses- og forskningsministeriet 2017). The asylum centres have an obligation to offer assistance from the Agency but are not responsible for doing so. The mapping of competences in the asylum centres is therefore only the beginning of a later validation of applicable skills. Denmark as well as Finland are the only countries where asylum seekers can already start training practices in local companies with certain pre-conditions (see table 2). To secure a bridge between the mapped competences in the asylum centres and the process in the receiver municipalities, a document called a "transfer scheme" (overgivelsesskema) is applied. The municipalities apply it as the quickest possible access to relevant information on the individual refugees' prior education and competences. It thereby gives the municipalities a stronger basis for mobilising an early and goal-oriented integration effort. The "transfer scheme" is digital and part of the asylum centres' IT system known as LetAsyl. However, evidence on how these processes function in practice has not been thoroughly evaluated, partly because it is too early to assess the accumulated experience of management practice, but also because no research has been conducted on these specific measures yet. Recent research on refugee groups from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in Denmark shows, however, that qualifications acquired prior to migration in the country of origin have no direct or indirect effect on labour market outcomes, nor when complemented by domestic language

proficiency. What raised the employment level of these refugee groups was the acquisition of more education in the destination country (Arendt, Nielsen and Jakobsen, 2016).

### 3.2 Finland

Finland has not implemented systematic, national solutions for mapping competences at an early stage in the asylum phase. However, there are private agents who screen refugees' competences (Eurofund, 2016). They have adopted an action plan for assessing the professional skills of asylum seekers at reception centres while they are awaiting their asylum decisions. The assessment outcomes are considered when settlement regions are chosen to match education and business opportunities with their skills. After asylum seekers have been granted residence, their skills are more comprehensively assessed. In cases of delays or extended time for moving former asylum seekers from reception facilities to settlement locations, part of the comprehensive skills assessment can be carried out at the reception centres (OECD 2016).

In Finland, a mandatory individualised integration plan came into force in 1999 as part of the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers. Evidence illustrates that this intervention has had a largely positive impact on the earnings of disadvantaged immigrants.

The individualised integration plans can include language courses and other courses specifically designed for immigrants e.g. training in civic and working life skills, vocational training, subsidised job placements, rehabilitation and so forth. The integration plans seem to have increased the time spent on language courses and other training specifically designed for immigrants, while scaling down job-seeking courses. A suggestion has been made in the most recent Finnish knowledge overview in this field. The authors suggest improving the quality of matching immigrants' pre-existing skills with the training offered and conclude that this measure may substantially improve the efficiency of ALMP (active labour market policies) for migrants (Sarvimäki and Hämäläinen, 2016).

In Finland, many of the services – such as language courses, guidance and counselling, as well as civic education – are provided within the framework of a 'personalised integration plan'

(OECD, 2017).

Overview of new or planned measures for labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers that are to be implemented by 2018:

- **Start-up refugees: mapping asylum seekers'** language and other skills and connecting to jobseekers and employers. It is a standalone measure but connected to similar (private) initiatives, such as Recommend a Refugee and Zharity. Helping to connect job-seeking **asylum seekers** (not refugees, despite the name) with potential employers

- **On-the-job learning agreement:** On-the-job learning to attain a vocational qualification (refugees and immigrants are one of the target groups). The measure would make possible unpaid on-the-job learning, which does not exist at present. It is part of the education reform's second cycle, one of the 26 key projects of the government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä (Eurofound 2016).

### 3.3 Norway

There is some variation in competence mapping in Norway. For quota refugees' language skills, education and work experience is mapped both through the UNHCR form and the IMDIs interview form. Competence mapping for asylum seekers is carried out by the UDI (The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) where the focus is on relevance for settlement through a system called Sesam (System for elektronisk samhandling med asylmottakene) where language, education, professional experience, the desire for a future profession and other skills are listed. On receipt of a resident permit, the information gathered is reviewed and the sequel is dependent on the range of receipts. However, the quality of registration through the Sesam system has been criticised for being too weak (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, May 2016).

Kompetanse Norge (formerly Vox) was commissioned to create a digital self-registering mapping instrument for better labour market integration: a mapping instrument customised for minority languages and different life situations. The self-registering mapping should then be followed up with career guidance provided through one of the 38 Carrier centres (working with NAV, Voksenopplæring, oppfølgingstjenster and schools), located across Norway. What the Carrier centres offer is different, but in principle it contains career recommendations for individuals from the

age of nineteen (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016; Det Kongelige Kunnskapsdepartementet, February 2016). The development of the self-registering mapping instrument has been delayed and therefore the Educational Directorate (Utdanningsdirektoratet) has not been able to prioritise the cooperation needed for the project. The plan was to launch the tool in the summer of 2017. However, it seems not to be ready and both the function and effects of this early mapping tool remain to be seen (Kompetens Norge, 2016).

We find very few studies or evaluation on the use and effects of early mapping. The studies we find are more about the Norwegian Introduction Programme, a programme that has an entry obligation and exit restrictions. Djuve (2015:407) describes it as *"probably one of the world's most financially generous integration regimes for newly arrived immigrants."*

Every year, between 8-13 thousand refugees are registered in the NIP (Norwegian Introductory Programme). The programme has the explicit aim of influencing the action of immigrants and is designed to increase the transition to work. The municipalities have come up with an array of courses in addition to the central components, language training, social studies and work-oriented activities, to make the programme full-time based on individual plans (Djuve and Kavli, 2015; Djuve, 2010). The introduction of the NIP represented a marked shift in Norwegian integration policy. The shift was from low-intensity language training towards a compulsory full-day, year-round activation programme. A two-year introductory programme with economic self-sufficiency is its main objective. In the report, *Ti års erfaringer – Fafo* (a Norwegian Research Foundation) discusses whether challenges still exist for the municipalities to fulfil their obligations and offer a full-day programme, individual adaptation of an introductory programme and adequate access to good and relevant measures (Djuve and Kavli, 2015).

Research on integration is usually at national level while integration in itself takes place at local level, where people work, live, socialise and seek education. A range of different integration initiatives is ongoing in different regions, but there are also differences to be found in variations on how national programmes are implemented and enforced. Studies show that obligatory

programmes in Norway and Finland have a positive relationship between participation and employment. In Norway, the programme is meant to be on an individual level, but is often dependent on local offerings. The municipalities are flexible in adapting to local conditions and this results in minimalist solutions and the indulgence of individual skills and needs (Hagelund and Kavli, 2017).

Djuve (2015) marks the transition rates from the introductory programme as high. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement as the employment gap implies. It has been suggested that the municipalities must improve the scope of action within the current regulatory framework. More of the training should take place in workplaces through cooperation between the municipalities and local and regional working life in order to strengthen the qualifications of refugees (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016). Several approaches and measures have been attempted and are being tested and will be explained better in the chapter about validation and labour market measures.

### 3.4 Sweden

Since 2010, Arbetsförmedlingen (AF, Sweden's Public Employment Agency) has been responsible for the competence mapping of all refugees seeking asylum status. A meeting, the *etableringssamtal* is supposed to be held at AF within one month of residency/asylum obtained, but the varying quality of these *"samtal"* is noted as a problem: not all refugees get a comprehensive mapping or an individual *Etableringsplan* drafted (AF 2017a). Placing refugees according to mapping results/ labour market needs has not been happening in Sweden to date. According to AF, most refugees don't have competences that motivate such placement efforts (AF 2017a).

One could argue that mapping should be done earlier, during the asylum process, especially since it now takes approx. 15 months to gain asylum in Sweden. Following a government decision in 2016, AF is gradually starting to map the competences and skills of asylum seekers, using a new online tool (*jobbskills.se*) in the main refugee languages. One hundred people have been employed at AF to reach out to asylum seekers with information about the tool. But they are not offering one-on-one coaching, and the system is yet to be synced with the main job-searching

tools provided by AF. Placing refugees based on mapping results and labour-market needs is still not happening. In addition to the new mapping system, Länsstyrelserna are providing funding for civil society, folkhögskolor and studieförbund to provide so called early measures for asylum seekers (Länsstyrelsen, 2017).

When it comes to research on the use and effects of the early mapping of competences, we found very few studies. And these were in fact targeting the *Etableringsprogram*, the official labour market integration program at AF as a whole rather than the competence mapping system. JK Larsson, cited in Delmi 2015, finds that the *etableringsprogram*, where the *etableringssamtal*/mapping exercise is the starting point, is too bureaucratic. Staff put too much emphasis on reporting hours and activities instead of focusing on their clients' individual needs and aspirations, based on the comprehensive mapping of competences, offering truly relevant courses and matching them with relevant employers. Clients get involved, but not in the most effective ways to find suitable jobs. And women get even less individual support, many participate part-time and are offered less valuable or less effective courses, etc. (Delmi, 2017). Riksrevisionen shares this view in their evaluation of *Etableringsprogrammet* in 2015, stating that it is not effective and not customised to the needs of each client/refugee. A major problem seems to be the lack of a "red thread" or logical sequence that the various activities would follow to reach a set target (AF, 2017a). The Swedish Employment Agency has recently been commissioned by the government to improve labour market matching where it is proposed among other things to tailor the programme to the labour market's needs (Arbetsförmedlingen, October 2017).

Nevertheless, a quantitative evaluation of the current *Etableringsprogram* shows a slightly stronger labour market affiliation and higher incomes for refugees who had completed the programme, compared to refugees who had completed previous (pre-2010) local integration programs run by municipalities. For women, however the results had not improved (Andersson & Joona et al 2016). In other words, there is room for improvement and, in fact, AF has already found a way forward, addressing these challenges in the so called "fast tracks" that will be explained in the next section. It should also be added that

various local pilot projects for quick integration, funded and evaluated by Tillväxtverket (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth), provide evidence as to the value of early mapping of competences and local matching to employers' needs. When collaboration works locally, between AF, the municipality providing SFI (Swedish for immigrants) and adult education, local businesses and branch organisations, by someone dedicated to coordinating the mapping and match-making, many refugees end up finding employment locally. This goes for refugees *with* asylum. Project partners often find it more difficult to work with asylum seekers, since they often have to move from one asylum centre to another (Tillväxtverket, 2017).

**Table 2. Systematic Skills assessments for humanitarian migrants in the Scandinavian countries 2015.**

	Humanitarian migrants
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes – in the asylum centres by asylum operators, online transfer scheme connects early mapping and validation at later stages.
<b>Finland</b>	Yes (under revision, will change in 2018).
<b>Norway</b>	Yes – done by UDI through IT-based tool SESAM, combined with mapping before and after settlement in municipalities.
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes – done through AF.

Source: OECD (2016) (based on OECD questionnaires 2015), UDI (2017).

The Scandinavian countries use labour market access as an incentive for asylum seekers to co-operate in the application procedure. Finland shortened the waiting period for those with valid IDs, while Norway and Sweden predicate labour market access on valid documents or asylum seekers actively assisting in obtaining them. As far as asylum seekers are concerned the countries have decided to grant access to the labour market to some groups of applicants, on certain conditions. Sweden and Norway allow some asylum seekers to work as soon as they have filed their asylum claims although other obstacles may apply. The other countries impose a prior waiting period.

## 4. Validation and labour market measures

The importance of the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) has been highlighted many times in European policy documents. These documents reflect the necessity of giving a new conceptual framework to existing and emerging key challenges in education and training. One of the objectives often emphasised is the need to improve recognition of qualifications and skills, including those gained outside formal education. The European Union has asked its Member States to put the necessary arrangements for validation in place by 2018 (Cedefop 2016; Cedefop 2017). The Nordic Council of Ministers has through its work with the Nordic Adult Learning Centre mobilised a range of projects in relation to developing a Nordic framework for validation (NVL, 2015).

Norway, Finland and Denmark have developed an overarching, uniform legal framework for RVA whereas Sweden has not.

As refugees, both low-skilled people or people with no formal qualifications from their country of origin, inventories for assessing their real valid skills in a new place are crucial for their point of departure into the labour force in the host country.

For others who are highly skilled but not validated, some inspiration can be found in a European context. For the highly skilled, programmes put forward in a European context could be initiated as part of Nordic cooperation that are similar to the European Commission's Sciences4Refugees initiative. This initiative is aimed at matching asylum seekers and refugees who have scientific backgrounds with positions in European universities and research institutions that include internships and part- and full-time jobs (OECD, 2016).

### 4.1 Validation tools developed in the Scandinavian context

The integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market is of supreme interest in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

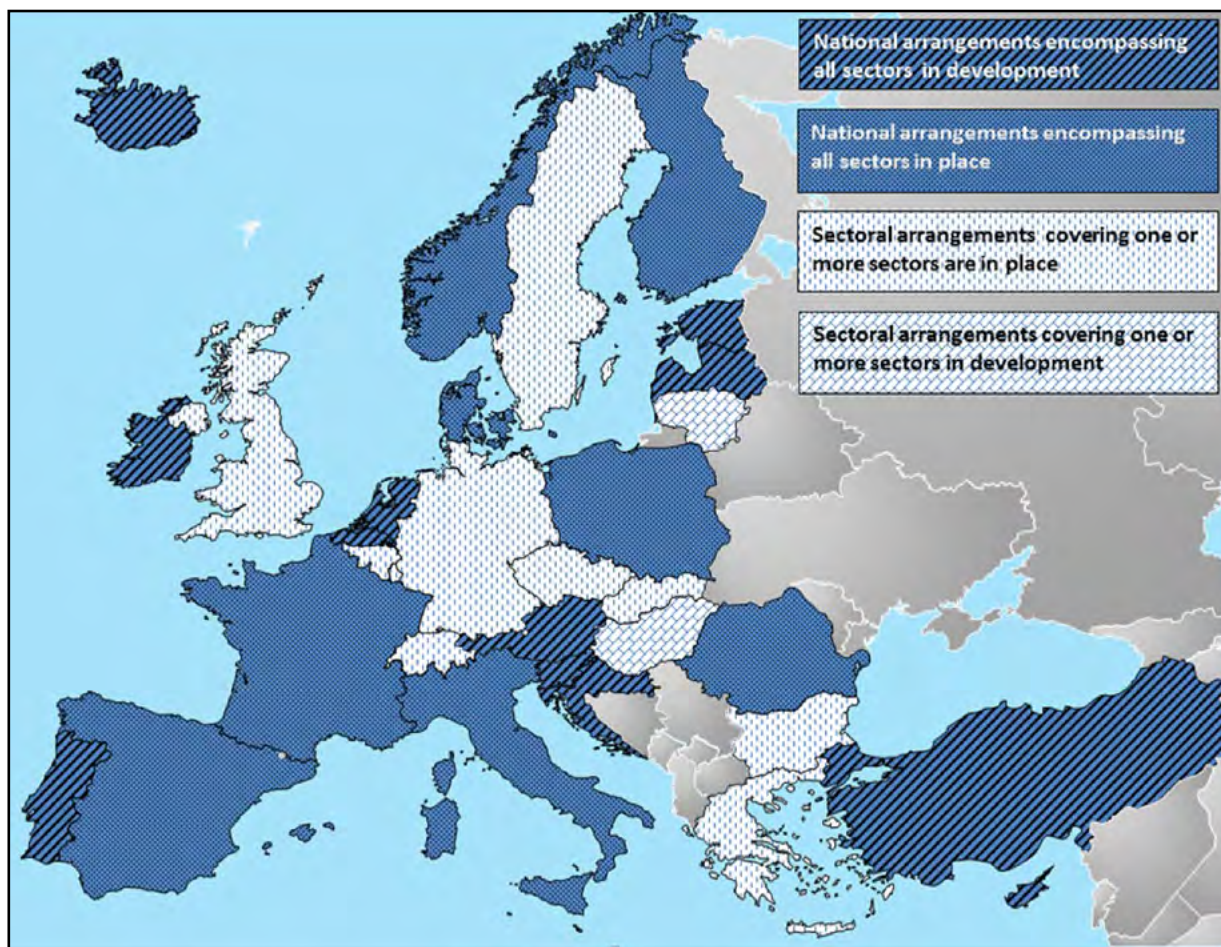
Sweden in particular is an interesting case with its compressed wage distribution with high entry-level wages that pose hurdles to employment for the low skilled (Bussi and Pareliussen, 2017).

In 2015, the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) expert working group produced a report that addresses the significance of adults' key



Picture by Mostphotos.





*Figure 1. Validation programmes in European countries. Source: 2016 European inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.*

competences from a societal viewpoint, as well as the role of adult education in the development of key competences.

This initiative produced a range of publications focusing on describing key competences relating to Folkbildning/folkelig dannelse (see definition in NVL, 2016) and how they can be validated (NVL, 2016). The competences being developed in Folkbildning are rooted in voluntary engagement through courses, joint practical activities and reflection. These competences are generally obtained in non-formal or informal settings (circles and/or courses) or in voluntary work or through involvement in associations. The Folkbildning position has its strongest proponents in the Scandinavian countries. Despite the joint Nordic initiative (which has a guiding role for Nordic cooperation), the individual countries in the region have different practices, legislation and validation systems in place.

This has resulted in a roadmap being created for a common Nordic validation system. The 2018

roadmap provides a broad perspective on the validation of real competences and its aim is to draw a picture of how validation functions. Validation does not merely focus on the identification and recognition of competences, but also on how the result is beneficial for individuals and for society. To this end, objective requires a supporting infrastructure that not only promotes validation, but is also of importance to the educational sector and to competence matching on the labour market (NVL, 2016). How this will work for non-natives remains to be seen, but it is worthwhile assessing compared to the systems for refugees that are in place.

## 4.2 Denmark

Since 1997, there has been an option within the vocational training system for clarifying and assessing competences on an individual basis – the so-called competence clarification (IKA). Validation has been practised in Denmark since 2007 on the basis of a comprehensive law on

validation within adult education, academia and diploma education (VEU, 2017). This validation system, however, is primarily aimed at the indigenous population. The Danish national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (NQF) consists of eight levels that together contain all publicly approved qualifications, including certificates and degrees from primary school up to university level. The NQF has been developed by an inter-ministerial working committee (2007–2009), which includes representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, Ministry of Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Economics and Business, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) and the National Agency for the Internationalisation of Education and Training (VEU, 2017).

A permanent national coordination committee was set up in 2009, comprising representatives of the four relevant ministries. This committee is responsible for implementation and further development of the NQF with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the Danish education and training system.

According to Denmark's national strategy for lifelong learning (Undervisningsministeriet 2007), the government's aim is to create better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and recognised within the adult education and continuing training system, regardless of where that knowledge and those skills and competences were acquired. This promotes adult participation of adults in education and continuing training, and increases their opportunities on the labour market. Legislation was enacted in 2007–2008 to increase recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training, ranging from general adult education to diploma level (Andersen and Aagard, 2012).

New initiatives are being taken to improve both the situation of indigenous youth and young refugees, i.e. through integration education, a vocational training support. On 1 July 2016, a new programme for companies in Denmark that hire refugees has been introduced. This programme is called Integration education (IGU). The objective when introducing an IGU process is to enable the students to gain a qualification level certificate through practical experience, language-related training and on-the-job training. With that recognition on behalf of the authorities and the

public and private sector companies involved, they subsequently gain access to formal vocational training and education (Grundfos, 2017). The municipalities in Denmark can promote on-the-job training for vulnerable groups and the low-skilled by offering financial contributions to work-places to engage with those groups. They can also ease integration and learning among citizens with non-formal and informal competences through trainee contracts with companies.

### 4.3 Norway

Norwegian authorities, like authorities in the neighbouring countries, have placed great emphasis on how they can speed up immigrants' integration into the labour market and increase their employment rate. In 2015, growth in employment in Norway was under 1% which is less than the population growth. Unemployment has also increased gradually since mid-2014, with quite wide regional differences (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016). Getting education and skills validated can be an important factor in relation to the successful labour market integration of immigrants.

NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) evaluates foreign education with Norwegian education. Critical voices claim that the evaluation procedures are too cumbersome and unnecessarily complicated (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016). Those who are unable to document their qualifications must go through a UVD-procedure, which includes experts' evaluation and extensive testing to get NOKUT's recognition. Many refugees have difficulties in fulfilling NOKUT's requirements, such as language skills. As a response, a pilot project was launched between February and May in 2016. Twenty individuals with applications that could not be completed with a legally-binding decision were granted a Qualification Passport for Refugees containing information on the applicant's highest completed education, work experience and language proficiency. The Qualification Passport is valid for three years to provide an opportunity to find employment, get further education and to improve their language proficiency (NOKUT, May 2016).

Experience and feedback was conducted in focus groups where employers, the integration sector and higher education institutions had a discussion on the experiment. The feedback was

positive and constructive, including a belief that the tool had good potential to be effective. A short survey from the candidates illustrates that the passport is seen as a valuable offer. It has been concluded that this model of recognition will be a permanent scheme where the experience and the feedback is used for further development of the tool. The Qualification Passport for refugees will give refugees with higher education but who are not qualified via the UVD procedure, a real option. Compared to the UVD procedure, the cost of this model is significantly lower (NOKUT, May 2016). Only refugees having gone through higher education can apply for the Qualification Passport for refugees.

In early 2016, a working group was formed to assess and implement several labour market measures to speed up labour market participation. This included getting labour market entities involved to facilitate the entry of refugees into the labour market, which is considered an effective learning platform that should be better utilised (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj, 2016). These are considerations that are in line with Hagelund and Kavli (2017) and point out that programmes closely linked to the labour market are more effective, as are wage subsidies in the main (Hagelund and Kavli, 2017).

The Labour and Welfare Organisation in Norway (NAV) has several measures and instruments to provide jobseekers with opportunities to enter the labour market. All the measures provided are available in principle to jobseekers from an immigrant background, while none of the measures are meant for one specific group. Vocational training is, together with labour market education (AMO), the most widely used initiative for jobseekers from an immigrant background. Other measures, for example, are mentoring at the workplace, insertion grants and mapping and assessment of competences (short term), to name just a few.

Evaluations of government labour market measures show consistent positive, moderate effects. Ordinary work participation in addition to assistance with an effective job search deliver the best results, where wage subsidies have the greatest effect on the transition to work which is in line with other evaluation researches. Despite a fairly quick pay-off and showing good results, this measure is hardly used any more. This is attributed to the employers' obligations to hire

on ordinary terms, often considered onerous and complicated (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016).

A measure based on **vocational training** has not delivered given results as good as hoped for and an evaluation did not show there was any effect on employment. The results might be misleading due to a short time frame and the possibility that employment was the goal to begin with. As a response to a potential bias, the regulations and guidelines were changed in 2016, in the hope of a better result, including closer follow-up with both employers and participants and clearer guidance (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016).

The proportion of participants in the Norwegian Introductory Programme with **ordinary work as part of their programme** fell by 10% from 2007–2011. The use of work preparation and education as part of the introductory programme is considered rather modest. At the same time, it is regarded as having a positive influence on the transition to work after completion of the programme. The working group from the Labour and Pensions Policy Council recommends that this option be utilised more in the Introductory Programme (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, May 2016).

In order to facilitate early participation in working life, the working group recommended that a fast track (**Hurtigsporet**) will be established in order better to utilise refugees' competence in sectors requiring labour. This labour market measure is aimed at refugees that are close to the labour market. The idea is that hurtigsporet can take over from the Introductory Programme at some point, when relevant to the individual's education, professional experience and interests. The two-year programme can be too standardised for those who already have some language skills and competences required on the labour market. Hurtigsporet is meant to facilitate a quick start for those who are motivated (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, May 2016).

**Jobbsjansen** is a qualification programme targeted at immigrants who have been outside the labour market for some time with a particular focus on female homemakers. The programme can last up to two years, and even up to four years, when participants lack any elementary education. The purpose is to provide a foundation for labour market participation or further education where the aim is a 60% transition rate. In 2016, the transition rate was 68% and

increased by 5 percentage points from the year before. In addition, 44% of participants improved their Norwegian language skills, with the greatest progress being among those with poor language skills at the outset. Education, experience gained in paid employment and placement on the regular labour market during the programme all proved to have a positive effect on the outcome (Høgestøl and Skutlaberg, 2017).

Another labour market measure aimed at refugees and other immigrants is what is referred to as **'place then train'**, where ordinary workplaces within the healthcare sector are used as training and qualifying arenas. The measure is meant to address the need for the effective integration of refugees, the need for qualified labour within the healthcare sector and to increase labour market measures. The evaluation outcome (from late 2016) illustrates that practice in ordinary work places plays an important role in the participants' training. It applies to the development of their vocational skills, their language skills and their general knowledge of norms and expectations in the Norwegian labour market (Kjargård Eide et al., December 2016).

Several interesting and inspiring initiatives have also been developed at regional level. They include nine recent and productive initiatives taken through regional collaboration with IMDi (integration and multicultural directorate of Norway) where lifelong learning and guidance is tailored to the needs of low-skilled citizens and citizens with no formal education, as practised in different municipalities around the country. The following are three examples of interesting initiatives.

Fjell municipality has a project **'Rett i jobb'**, a developing project targeted at newly arrived refugees, with lengthy work experience and some formal competence from the country of origin. It is a two-year programme that combines language training, job-apprenticeship, introduction to Norwegian society and a special mentor. The mentor guides and involves the people in networks that will benefit them in building up further education in Norway (IMDi, 2017).

Odda municipality has a programme **'Fra intro-deltaker til fagarbeider'**, which aims to recruit people with little or no formal qualifications into two much needed vocational training programmes for healthcare assistants and chemical-processing operators. The programme is tailored to the needs of refugees and the low-skilled with a background

only in primary education and is carried out in collaboration with the municipal authority and the local high school. Participants get extensive support for language training and other education to be able to fulfil the requirements (IMDi, 2017).

Tromsø municipality and county carries out programmes designed to help newly arrived refugees to create their own resources. Guidance is offered as part of the Introductory Programme, that focuses on a positive human vision and the notion that everyone possesses some talent, thus proffering the ability to see opportunities and to make good and wise choices on their own career path (IMDi, 2017).

#### 4.4 Finland

In Finland, the skills of an immigrant can be assessed using a competence and professional skills survey. If documents are missing or if it is unclear how a vocational qualification compares to Finnish qualifications, an assessment will be made as to whether the applicant can move directly to the labour market. The additional support measures in terms of provision of information and support are also good practice and help beneficiaries throughout the procedure (European Commission 2015).

Recognition of qualifications – Executive responsibility:

- 1) Recognition for qualifications and degrees, and statements: Finnish National Board of Education.
- 2) Professional practice rights: industry-specific authorities.
- 3) Competence and professional skills survey: the Employment and Economic Development Office purchases an expert assessment from the training provider as an outsourced service.

Recognition of qualifications – Financial responsibility:

- 1) In connection with integration training: the Employment and Economic Development Office may bear (with State funds) the expenses of recognising a qualification or degree per customer. Otherwise the customer bears the expenses him/herself.
- 2) The customer bears the expenses.
- 3) MEE/State.

According to a study conducted by the Nordic adult learning centre (NVL, 2017), form, content and practice of such certificates differs widely across educational institutions and levels. This liberal adult education certificate developed as a



validation tool needs further improvement to fulfil the objectives of granting competences that have been acquired in different contexts.

Validation of competences in the guidance process requires the development of competences for both professional guidance counsellors and other people engaged in guidance activities. Certification is often seen as the sole aim of the validation procedure. In this case, Finland may be missing the true potential of recognition as a starting point for setting goals, learning and career planning. Identification and mapping of knowledge, skills and competences is a dialogue between the customer and the counsellor, the aim of which is professional and personal development (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012).

Even though in the competence-based qualification system guidance is perceived as an integral part of the process, it is not adequately defined (Karttunen, 2015). It needs to declare what the guidance should entail, what the aim of guidance in the validation process should be and what the competences of those providing guidance on validation should be. From time to time, the qualification system appears to be mechanistic and focus on the recognition and certification process instead of on individual and professional development. The competence-based qualifications are established and well known, there is a myriad of quality assurance mechanisms in place and the system is flexible and it takes individual needs into account.

The system is transparent and sustainable but tailored to the indigenous population and not refugees or people from abroad with foreign qualifications or informal qualifications. It has upgraded the competence level of hundreds of thousands of Finns and provided the labour market with a better-qualified and skilled workforce. The system and qualification requirements are under constant revision, which responds to the needs of working life. The whole qualification system from planning to execution is carried out in cooperation with working life and other relevant stakeholders.

For any validation system to gain trust and high market value from all stakeholders, there should be proper legislation and policies, quality assurance mechanisms in place, constant competence development of professionals and sustainable co-operation structures with working life and other relevant stakeholders (see labour market measures on matching).

## 4.5 Sweden

According to Arbetsförmedlingen, the effect of validation on refugees' prospects of finding relevant work has not been properly evaluated. However, interviews with refugees indicate that validation has helped them to find work or internships faster, especially if validation was complemented with work-oriented Swedish courses and branch-specific vocational training and practice. It is important, however, that language limitations do not become a barrier against proper validation. *Bedömning* or evaluation of foreign academic exams is a related procedure that has been proven to help newcomers on the Swedish labour market (AF, 2017a; Delmi, 2015; IFAU, 2017; SKL, 2017).

In a recent article mentioned earlier in this section, Margherita Bussi and Jon Pareliussen (2017) came to similar conclusions when they investigated how education level, literacy skills and migrant origin affect employment and an over-qualification mismatch in Sweden. They show that possessing Swedish qualifications clearly reduces the risk of mismatch. This points to the importance for the non-indigenous population of gaining recognition of formal and informal competences, followed by a Swedish education or training to cater to employers' strong preference for Swedish degrees or certificates (Ibid, 2017). The authors find that investment in the formal education (and adult training) of new immigrants pays triple dividends:

- It boosts literacy skills
- It improves employment prospects
- Qualifications attained in Sweden strongly enhance matching

Yet another study along these lines comes from Västergötlandsregionen (2014:5). It shows a higher probability of having a highly skilled job if you have a higher education from a Swedish university than one from abroad. It also claims that *yrkesutbildningar* vocational courses taken in Sweden not only increase the chances of getting a job, but also improve matching. A possible explanation put forward is that it is easier for Swedish employers to value a Swedish exam or education than a foreign equivalent. It is also clear that human capital acquired in one country has less value when you move to another country (VG-regionen, 2014). This leads us to believe that AF should do more to ensure that all



refugees with some vocational skills or foreign academic credentials should have these validated and complemented with a Swedish education. Interestingly, this seems to be the plan. Since 2016, 14 so-called **fast tracks** or *Snabbspår* leading to 30 different kinds of jobs within sectors in dire need of staff have been established by AF in collaboration with employers/branches and trade unions. Each track follows three steps which also create the sought-after "red thread" towards the goal of getting a well-matched position: mapping, validation, and additional training, plus targeted language courses (*yrkessvenska*) running in parallel. One potential factor of success is that a continuous dialogue between all responsible parties is inherent to each fast track.

Since the fast tracks are so new, they have not yet been evaluated, but statistics on participants seem promising: on average, 45% of enrolled refugees within vocational or non-academic working fields had got a job after 13-15 months on the fast track programme. For jobs requiring academic exams and certificates (e.g. nurses, doctors and teachers), it took longer. (AF, 2017b) Only a lucky few continue to be offered proper validation or fast tracks. To date, around 3,500 people are enrolled. AF says it's a challenge to find refugees who match the fast-track criteria. At the same time, AF states the need to increase the numbers to meet the needs of branches with high labour demands (AF, 2017a). SKL is also concerned about the state of validation practices in Sweden, stating that more refugees need a proper validation and that Sweden needs a national validation authority (SKL, 2017). A remaining challenge is the large group of refugees with too limited schooling and skills to be able to follow a fast track.

### ***Fast tracks/Snabbspår – a few examples: teachers and superintendents***

In Sweden, a considerable number of refugees from Syria are teachers. They now teach reception classes of newly arrived refugee students in Arabic. A fast-track assessment programme was developed specifically for humanitarian migrants who are teachers. Their skills are evaluated and their qualifications recognised directly for a certain job (Arbetsförmedlingen 2017b). During the programme, they also attend six-month preparatory teacher-training courses in Arabic at Swedish universities, as well as intensive Swedish courses for academics called *Korta vägen* (Umeå university, 2016). All in all, 764 foreign teachers are now enrolled on the fast-track programme, which makes it the biggest programme. Of the ones who finished their first year of the programme, 38% had got a job (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2017b).

Another fast-track programme with an even higher job matching rate at 46% after 13–15 months relates to housing management, e.g. for superintendents looking after apartment buildings. Here competence mapping is followed by a branch-directed validation process with theoretical and practical components, complemented by training modules and examination - plus language courses running in parallel.

The second largest fast-track programme, currently including 609 people, is designed for refugees with a background in health care. This track takes longer since it involves more complementary courses and intense language training before students can apply for a Swedish licence as a doctor or nurse etc.

## **ENTRANCE FOR LOW-SKILLED IMMIGRANTS**

It is clear that low-skilled migrants face the greatest difficulty when it comes to entering the Nordic labour markets, considering the low proportion of low-skilled jobs available. As stated earlier, Sweden has the lowest share of low-skilled jobs of all EU countries at 5.2%, closely followed by Finland at 6.3% (Fores, 2016). New evaluations from the Swedish Employment Agency show that start-up jobs, employment support and subsidised employment for people with limitations increases the ability to receive unsubsidised work (Arbetsförmedlingen, October 2017). Yet, it is also evident from our

studies (as cited earlier) that the Nordic countries are struggling to develop effective labour market entry measures for this group of migrants as part of the introductory programmes for all refugees. In Sweden, for example, AF points out that the problem is that the low-skilled cannot be enrolled on the new and seemingly effective fast-tracks simply because they have previous work experience or knowledge that is too limited to build on (AF, 2017b). One step that has been taken, however, is to provide special SFI classes for illiterate students and students with less than nine years of schooling, and these classes

**Table 3. Integration support for low-educated humanitarian migrants in the Nordic Countries 2015**

Adult education combined with long-term language training					
	Yes/No	Obligatory	Childcare	Evening courses	Transport reimbursement
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	No (except for recipients of cash allowances)	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Finland</b>	Yes	No, but if agreed in the integration plan, the immigrant must attend a language course	Not within the language training system	Yes, for independent studies; No, for labour market courses	Yes
<b>Norway</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Source: OECD 2016 (based on 2015 OECD questionnaires).

are showing promising results (AF, 2017a). AF is also encouraging local authorities to provide more targeted adult education programmes for refugees with limited schooling. There is also an ongoing discussion between AF and the government about the need to extend the introductory programme for low-skilled refugees beyond the 2 years, simply because two years are not sufficient to prepare them for the labour market (AF, 2017a). Another way forward for the low-skilled is to get involved in civil society initiatives and social businesses such as Livstykett in Stockholm, which produces hand-made textile products, or catering businesses supplying food or confectionery based on good craftsmanship (Tillväxtverket, 2017; Länsstyrelsen, 2016b).

Norway focuses heavily on low-skilled humanitarian migrants in its integration efforts, endeavouring to provide them with the basic skills they need to be functional. Courses include Norwegian language training and grounding in the country's society and culture. The aim is to prepare refugees and their family members for employment or further education. Indeed, all humanitarian migrants above compulsory schooling age who require primary or lower-secondary education are entitled to dedicated, long-term adult education in the subjects on the primary and lower-secondary curriculum for adults (OECD, 2016). Skills levels can determine the nature of integration support. Indeed, Norway requires refugees who lack basic skills to take part in introductory programmes, but not their more highly skilled peers. Although it might seem obvious that it is in the refugees' own interest to take part in introductory programs, it could be argued that those lacking basic skills may be less aware of the benefits such programmes yield (OECD, 2016).

Like other residents in Norway, unemployed immigrants are registered and get benefits from the NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration). NAV has also come across many of the job seekers with immigrant background who

do not have competences that employers require or who have had problem getting their skills and competences documented (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, May 2016). Immigrants from Somalia are a group that has faced many challenges financially and socially in Sweden as well as in Norwegian society. Research shows that many within this group have little faith/trust in official institutions like AF and NAV. Friberg and Elgvin (2016) argue there is a fundamental mismatch between available policy instruments in the Norwegian regime and the needs of many Somali immigrants, a mismatch that could also apply to some other groups of immigrants. The available labour-market measures fail to work, since many lack basic education and the immigrants have learned by experience that participation does not lead to employment. The basic education they need is not available and for years they are trapped in a system that gives nothing back. It involves repeated internships and some Somalis experience being forced to give away their labour to get money for their basic needs (Friberg and Elgvin, 2016).

In addition to employment, education is a crucial indicator of integration. As mentioned before, national authorities play an important role in providing lifelong training and education, enabling immigrants to supplement previous training to better fit the host country labour market (Hagelund and Kavli, 2017). Around 560,000 individuals in Norway have elementary school as their highest educational level. For low-skilled refugees, it might be appropriate for them to go through modular training (fagbrev på job) in cooperation with labour market entities to get an occupation certificate (fag- og svennebrev). Inspired by Swedish examples, a pilot project within the healthcare sector is also in progress with the University of Oslo and Akershus and the health authorities (Arbeidsgruppe for Arbeidslivs- og pensjonspolitisk råd, Maj 2016).

## 5. Recruitment decision and discrimination

Integration is a much-contested field of research and extremely difficult to evaluate. It is often contrasted with assimilation, and defined as a two-way process where the majority population and various minorities are in a process of mutual adaptation. Integration is seen as a way to close the gap between the majority and immigrants. The focus, however, still tends to be mainly on how immigrants move closer to the majority (Hagelund and Kavli, 2017).

When discussing integration, it is important to bear in mind that it is supposed to be a two-way process. Immigrants are not only out of employment, they are not being hired. It is important to look at both sides and not just focus on how immigrants can be integrated, but also how the labour market can be adjusted to them, and eventually hire them. In a poll made by IMDi (the Norwegian Integration and Diversity Directorate) among Norwegian employers, it was found that

many feel that refugees themselves and the government have the main responsibility for the integration of refugees. Half the respondents think that employers have a big responsibility like the rest of the population. 35% believe that it would be appropriate for them and relevant to their needs to provide an internship and 11% of the respondents had provided internships for refugees. However, 47% of employers replied that they thought it was not a suitable measure for their workplace (IMDi, 2016).

Birkelund, Heggebø and Rogstad (2016) studied discrimination on the Norwegian labour market, where they wanted to understand the mechanisms involved in employers' recruitment decisions. It has been noted that unemployment has a scarring effect when applying for jobs and the situation is even worse for minorities with different ethnic backgrounds due to discrimination on the labour market. Employers are significantly less likely to



*Picture by Mostphotos.*

call back long-term unemployed candidates and even less likely if they belong to a minority group. This discrimination is not limited to language proficiency or being uncertain about their skills obtained in a foreign country, since the evidence also shows discrimination against second-generation immigrants with domestic schooling and work experience (Birkelund, Heggebø and Rogstad, 2016).

Minority candidates are disadvantaged in the recruitment process in Scandinavian countries where a foreign name can cause uncertainty about language proficiency and productivity (Bursell, 2014; Birkelund, Heggebø and Rogstad, 2016). A recent study in Sweden, using a similar applications and skills level but using Swedish instead of Arabic names of the applicants resulted in a 50% lower chance of being called to an interview for applicants with Arabic names (Oxford Research, 2012). At higher skills levels, this discrimination almost disappeared for women, but remained for men. AF concludes that this result calls for more action by AF staff to be referees for refugees applying for jobs in Sweden (AF, 2017a). The study already cited by Bussi and Boreliussen (2017) also highlights the importance of reducing employers' uncertainty towards foreign skills and qualifications by providing refugees with complementary training and exams in Sweden. The chapter ahead on the role of civil society and networks provides greater insight on this issue,

underlining the positive employment effects and social inclusion - including less discrimination - when refugees are invited to join local networks and civil society organisations. In Sweden, discrimination is an important obstacle for newcomers. Measures need to be designed to reduce the perceived risk of employing refugees (Oxford Research, 2012). Fast track can be a way forward. Starting your own company or social business/cooperative is another option for unemployed new-comers in Sweden. TVV, Coompanion and Företagarna + IFS have all developed services and manuals to support immigrants with information on regulations, how to start a business, support with financing etc. (TVV, 2017)

Aure (2013) states that the structure of the local labour market must be examined to understand the process of exclusion. She has investigated the reasons why highly skilled migrants are unemployed in Tromsø, Norway. Despite her focus being on 'love migrants', her results could also be valid for other groups of immigrants, especially those in a more vulnerable situation. Studies show that Norwegian employers focus on language skills beyond their reasonable needs, possibly due to xenophobia. At the same time, limited language skills can be a barrier when presenting skills and experience and negotiating salaries, and also when navigating opportunities on the labour market (Aure, 2013).

# 6. Language, practice and education

## 6.1 Long-term integration through language training

OECD has highlighted the fact that an alternative efficient way to make sure that language courses consider the different needs of individual refugees is to make them modular (OECD, 2016). One way forward could be to focus on organising language learning in consecutive modules with increasingly advanced goals. In addition to efforts to diversify the content of courses, flexible modes of delivery play an essential role in breaking down barriers and enabling different refugee groups – including those who work or who have family obligations. Sweden is among the Nordic countries that specifically addressed this in 2017 in a programme for refugee women (Regeringen, 2016). The Jobbsjansen qualification programme in Norway is aimed at immigrants (not the newly arrived) who are positioned far from the labour market. Female homemakers and women married to Norwegian citizens were a particular focus in 2016 (Høgestøl and Skutlaberg, 2017:01).

On-the-job language training is also an important component of bridging programmes. While on-the-job training is suitable for skilled refugees with previous training or work experience, humanitarian migrants who were unable to complete their higher education before fleeing their country of origin stand to gain more from an



Picture by Yadid Levy/Norden.org.

opportunity to continue their education in the host country. More research of the effects of enabling this for a quicker integration into the labour market is needed, however, in all Nordic countries. In a report from the Swedish Employment Agency, it is stated that insufficient language skills are the main barrier for employing immigrants, even in relation to unqualified jobs (Arbetsförmedlingen, October 2017).

## 6.2 Iceland

Refugee integration in Iceland is significantly different from the Scandinavian countries, in

**Table 4. Maximum duration of language training for humanitarian migrants in Scandinavian countries 2015**

	Maximum duration of publicly financed language training	
	Maximum period of entitlement	Maximum number of hours
<b>Denmark</b>	5 years (can be extended, in cases of illness)	No limit on the number of hours
<b>Finland</b>	Maximum of 5 years (training must be started within 3 years of receiving protection)	Approx. 2100 hours incl. independent study work (language training 57%, civic education 36%, and guidance and counselling (7%)).
<b>Norway</b>	5 years	3000 hours
<b>Sweden</b>	No maximum period of entitlement	No limit on the number of hours



that only quota refugees go through a formal introduction programme supported by the authorities (Jönson, 2017; Útlendingastofnun, 2014). Other migrant groups, including new inhabitants/refugees with humanitarian protection in Iceland must find their own way through the system of language learning or other possibilities that benefit them in adapting to become functioning inhabitants. However, migrants face fewer problems getting jobs given the extremely low unemployment rate. In that light, a faster integration of refugees into the labour market is therefore less urgent in nature for Iceland compared to the societies of its Nordic neighbours. An Icelandic study conducted among women from Middle East living in Iceland followed their participation in lifelong learning courses (Rafik Hama, 2012). The aim was to investigate how best to meet the variety of these women's needs, and thus to enhance their access to the community. Also how this participation would serve the role establishing a safer community for their children and descendants allowing for integration of both the existing and new culture. The findings suggest that social networking, level of education and income problems are among the factors that affect refugees access to lifelong learning. The study addressed the need to develop programs in Iceland that include equal opportunities and equal access to courses needed to be secured to all refugees and immigrants in Iceland (Rafik Hama, 2012). Refugees that gain residence permit outside of the established quota refugee policy must fully finance self their attempt to integrate whether through language courses or other measures, like validation or acknowledgement of previous merits. Tailormade Icelandic courses need to be developed to ensure that refugees become independent active citizens. Evaluations conducted among refugee women who came 2005 and 2007 show that many of them did not endure active at the labour market (Gestsdóttir, 2017). The reasons are various and include lack of mental health support, access to continuous learning, and lack of Icelandic education (Gestsdóttir, 2017).

### 6.3 Denmark

In Denmark, illiterate refugees who lack basic skills may receive additional language training which goes beyond the scope of the official three-year induction programme and lasts for up to five years in total. There are similar arrangements in Norway

and Sweden, where training may be extended according to the needs of individual refugees and the capacity of the local authority concerned (OECD, 2016). The introductory integration programme offered is full time and combines language education, job-oriented guidance and upskilling and on-the-job training. Conversely, highly skilled refugees, often learn more quickly and require less training before they enter the labour market.

Introductory schemes referred to above typically include employment-related services, such as vocational training, counselling and job-search support, civic orientation and general adult education. Language training is generally the most important component (OECD, 2016). The refugee signs the integration contract with the municipality to which he or she has moved. The content and goals as well as employment or educational aims are as set out in the contract. There is as yet no documented effect analysis of the implementation because this new programme is currently under development, but a researcher group at KORA (the national institute for municipal and regional analysis and research in Denmark) has already conducted a benchmarking analysis and concluded that the effectiveness of individual language centres differs significantly and that with effectiveness spread more evenly among them, substantial economic resources might be saved (Jacobsen et.al, 2016; KORA, 2016).

Denmark is really speeding up employment integration among the waves of refugees arriving in 2015. Greater involvement on the part of the municipalities and the coalition of municipalities in the process is explained as one of the crucial partners, as an effect of the "trepartnersaftalen"/ the multilateral consensus on integration from early 2016 (Winther, 2017; Kommunernes landsforening, 2017). The integration programme (locally called the IGU process) is practised by the municipalities (and job centres). It is full time and planned for a year at a time. The refugees are by definition assumed to be ready for the labour market as soon as they arrive or get residence permits (Rambøll, 2017). However, there are strong indications that they are not (KL, 2017). Some of them cannot read the Latin alphabet and therefore obviously will not even be ready to sign into the job centre digitally in order to be registered as active job seekers. As a response to the inadequate documentation of the effectiveness

of the job centres (who were responsible for referring jobs to refugees), a new paradigm in employment reform has been introduced that is much more focused on companies than before (Berlinske, 2016). The integration contract signed by the refugee with the municipality of residence is under review and will also be aimed more than previously at companies that can recruit (Berlinske, 2016). One important element in the IGU process is the involvement of companies that are more focused on learning the Danish language. This was implemented in early June 2017 and is not yet fully implemented. The company targets Danish education and is supposed to contain both general language education and entry into the Danish society and its values combined. Hence the more the company targets the language education objective, the faster and better will be the opportunities for employment (Rambøll, 2017). The law reform contains a paradigm shift in the way that it changes in module tests, for the municipalities (in the outsourcing of this type of training and education) as well as changing number of class hours which can be up to 15 hours per week (Rambøll, 2017). Some of the larger companies in Denmark, i.e. ISS and Grundfos have been involved in designing the curriculum (Honoré, 2017). The coalition of Danish municipalities/KL has initiated cooperation with LG Insight in this process of offering the municipalities increased competences by working more closely with companies in the integration process (KL, 2017).

## 6.4 Finland

Finnish authorities acknowledge the great importance for migrants of learning Finnish or Swedish in order to increase their chances for a successful entry to the labour market. Support with integration is provided through individualised integration plans and offers different tracks depending on the individual's needs assessment (OECD, 2016). The integration training for adult migrants includes several items, such as language instruction, work life and civic skills classes (Pöyhönen & Tarnanen, 2015). The goal of language instruction is to achieve a certain level of CEFR by the end of the studies. However, some challenges arise regarding its implementation: shortages of caseworkers, access denied to women with childcare duties or inactive, long waiting times, or content not meeting integration needs (OECD, 2016). Integration training has

not been separately tailored for beneficiaries of international protection. Training is tailored according to language skills and learning abilities, not the immigrant's status. Immigrants' initial language skills as well as reading and writing skills are evaluated by an initial test. Training is divided into two levels and proceedings, for those who are completely illiterate and those who do not master the Latin alphabet. What this means in practice is that it differs depending on the locations where the refugees are located. The manner of language skills testing and evaluation varies from municipality to municipality (that is responsible for the initial assessment of those who receive social assistance on a non-temporary basis).

In the Uusimaa region, the language skills of refugees registered as Employment and Economic Development Office customers are thus registered as active jobseekers have been tested by the so-called "testipiste" for adult migrants (EMN, 2015). Since 2010, on basis of the integration act (Finnish National Board of Education, 2012), 20,000 have taken the test (<http://www.testipiste.eu/EN/>). Once registered as active job seekers, they are supposed to be linked by referral to training that is the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (MEE) (EMN, 2015). However, the offer of integration training implemented as labour market training has not been fully adjusted to the increase in the number of those requesting it. This has caused delay and interruption in the transition from initial services to integration training that contains language training, in addition there are regional differences in waiting times, the longest being for the Helsinki region (EMN, 2015). An example of good practice in the recent attempt by the Finnish authorities to improve integration efforts is in the Uusimaa region where a more occupation-oriented approach has been taken to language training, with the aim of making good use of the immigrant's professional skills (EMN, 2015). However, no analysis of its impact and whether or not it was successful is available as yet. A study on integration policies and the learning of a second language by adults in Finland shows a lack of statistics on the employment status of the people who have gone through integration training. Evidence from 2010 shows that the training paths lead either to precarious jobs or to business start-ups, rather than regular employment contracts anticipated during the training received (Pöyhönen & Tarnanen, 2015).

## 6.5 Norway

Norwegian language training is provided as part of the country's introductory programme for humanitarian migrants. Courses are provided by municipal authorities and streamed into three tracks with different rates of progression, working methods and group sizes. Different tracks suit different groups. One is suitable for migrants with little or no prior schooling, and includes illiterate migrants and those who have little experience in using written language. They can use written language as a tool for learning. Some, however, may have little or no experience of the Latin alphabet and others knowledge of one or more foreign languages. Another track is suitable for humanitarian migrants who have a good general education, including those educated to tertiary level.

To ensure that humanitarian migrants are assigned to the track that matches their profile and needs, municipalities identify and assess participants' educational background, occupation, profession, work experience, proficiency in foreign languages and future plans. The exercise may consist of a conversation with the migrant, possibly through an interpreter, complemented by language tests in Norwegian and other languages. Municipalities have two months in which to determine which tracks participants will follow (Lovdata 2012).

The main goal of integration policy is that immigrants and their children use their resources and contribute to wider society and as few as possible depend on welfare benefits.

Participation in the labour market and a good knowledge of the Norwegian language are considered key elements for integration into Norwegian society. The study shows that many of the active labour market policies widely used in Norway are inefficient for refugees and other immigrants. At a time when there is a huge influx of refugees, regional development policies must to a much larger extent plan for the settlement of this diverse group in all regions of the country (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby, 2015).

Labour market access can be profoundly contextual and skills must be made relevant under local conditions. Placing specific knowledge is important in the local context in many ways; it helps to make skills relevant for the local labour market, to navigate available and appropriate positions on the market and when socializing

in workplaces (Aure, 2013). Several studies also point out that there may be little interest locally in immigrants' competence. Given that immigrants in smaller places have higher education than the majority of the population, this could be an untapped potential for regional development (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby, 2015).

## 6.6 Sweden

It is fair to say that mastering Swedish is a key to getting a job in Sweden. Consequently, it is a problem that those offering *Svenska för invandrare* (SFI), which is a compulsory part of the establishment programme for all refugees, do not always provide high-quality training. As a result, refugees either drop out or pass the exam without an adequate command of Swedish. SFX classes, i.e. work-related language training, delivers better results than regular SFI, especially in combination with KOMVUX/vocational training (AF 2017). In the Gävleborg region, for example. AF and local authorities share the costs for branch-specific SFI and vocational training that run parallel. Since 2010, more than 50% of the 650 participants have got a job immediately after completing the program (see SKL Vägledning 2017). An evaluation published this year shows that SFI in combination with vocational training resulted in 80% of the students being able to support themselves within one to two years (Arbetsförmedlingen, October 2017).

Too few refugees are still being offered this option, except in Stockholm and some other regions. Lack of coordination within and between municipalities and language course providers and those providing vocational training is one reason (AF 2017a, p 37). Since 2010, Länsstyrelserna has been responsible for supporting and evaluating regions and municipalities in their integration work, including SFI and the practice of offering work/yrkespraktik. Their latest survey/report (2016a) shows that only 22% of municipalities provide yrkessvenska or vocational training with language as part of it. But 59% say they provide yrkespraktik. Hopefully this uneven situation can be somewhat improved within the fast tracks mentioned above, as all fast tracks include sector-specific Swedish courses and a platform for dialogue between all relevant parties.

Dialogue or collaboration are words that pop up repeatedly in most of the studies we have read for this report, mainly cited as a precondition for successful integration measures, together with

a call for improvement. SKL, in Agenda for integration (2017), and Tillväxtverket (2017) both underline the fact that local players, including local authorities, businesses/branch organisers and civil society, often find it difficult to collaborate with AF and Migrationsverket when it comes to identifying candidates among asylum-seekers and refugees for language/work practice (*praktikplatser*) with local employers. The ever-changing regulations are seen as an obstacle, especially for small companies. Limited language skills are another frequently cited barrier to successful work practice. It is a sort of a catch 22 situation since refugees need work practice to enhance their language skills. But, there are also recent local pilot projects funded by Tillväxtverket that prove that when collaboration works locally, competence mapping, training and job matching works really well and they result in

both language skills and employment for refugees. The projects "*Svets och Svenska*" in Högsby, "*Grön i Sala*" and "*Ny resurs i Emmaboda*" are all good examples of this.

Research into the rapid labour market integration of Bosnian refugees in a few industrial towns in Småland county in the 1990s also points to the importance of local competence mapping and job-matching to achieve faster integration. In this case, local authorities were well aware of the competences and skills needed by local employers and could match up refugees basically upon arrival. Fortunately, many refugees had a relevant background. This also shows that when a certain kind of labour is in high demand, refugees can get jobs without perfect language skills, as long as their job skills match employers' demands (Fores, 2011).

**Table 5. Targeted language training for humanitarian migrants in the Scandinavian countries, 2015**

	Publicly (co-) financed language programmes	Special language training for the poorly educated	Special language training for the highly educated	Modular language training
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Finland</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Norway</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (levelbased)
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: OECD 2016 (built on the 2015 survey).

**Table 6. Employment-related integration support for humanitarian migrants in the Scandinavian countries in 2015.**

	Job-related training	Vocational language training	On-the-job language training
<b>Denmark</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Finland</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Norway</b>	Yes	Yes (but limited, not systematic)	Yes (mainstream workplace training for basic skills, can be more integrated into competence building and workplaces)
<b>Sweden</b>	Yes	Yes (possibly sporadic)	Yes

Source: OECD 2016 (built on the 2015 survey), Brochmann et.al, 2017:2.

## 7. Role of civil society and importance of networks for finding jobs

Even if networks, as well as ethnic networks within host countries, are considered crucial in getting access to a job in the Nordic countries based on a number of studies (Buch & Hach, 2012, Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research 2010 d), not much is written about their importance for refugees. Several studies in Sweden focus on trafficking networks and how they work in the journey of refugees to the destination country, exploiting their vulnerability (Hassan & Biörklund, 2016). On the other hand, there are studies on the struggle for recognition, indicating that official channels of professional recognition are far less functional than informal paths leading to the labour market (Frykman, 2012). Most studies focus on immigrants in general and find that informal channels are still most effective for employment. That is in spite of a well-established institutional infrastructure in the Nordic countries (Emilsson, 2014, Hedberg et.al 2014). In a recent survey

conducted among over 300 refugees in Sweden, evidence shows that only three percents got a job with help from friends or people they knew (Alatrash et.al, 2016). Evidence from Finland, for example, indicates that in spite of the nationwide well-established system of public employment agencies in Finland, social networks still constitute a substantial source of job information and employment opportunities for immigrants on the Finnish labour market. The significance of these networks is particularly strong for non-nationals who, may find access to employment opportunities rather restricted in the host society (Ahmad, 2005).

Research cited by Delmi explains that since the 1990s, when unemployment figures started to rise in Sweden, employers started to avoid formal recruitment channels and use informal networks instead, simply because they had too many applicants otherwise. The same researcher



*Picture by Kitte Witting/Norden.org.*



finds that ethnic or non-indigenous networks can be useful on the labour market, if they consist of migrants who are well established on the labour market. Otherwise these networks will not lead to employment (Delmi, 2017; AF, 2017a). Jobs may not always be announced, underlining the importance of enabling access to acquaintances and wider society. Evidence from Denmark indicates that many jobs are never announced publicly and networks are commonly used to fill a position or to find a job (Chamber of Commerce and Oxford research, 2010). Social relations and contacts with surroundings through personal acquaintances cannot be underestimated, even with increased access to digital services and job platforms (Morgan, 2009). Recent research findings demonstrate that while career-oriented social networking markets (LinkedIn, Facebook, XING etc.) are increasingly appreciated by a large number of internet users, real world social ties are still more effective in getting jobs (Buettner, 2017).

The importance of networks and informal channels, provided by mentors or civil society, for finding work can be illustrated in several ways. In Sweden, around 70% of the unemployed who eventually found work did so via informal channels or networks, while only 16% found a job via the formal channel, i.e. Arbetsförmedlingen (AF, 2017a). In another study, 70% of foreign academics say that lack of networks was the greatest obstacle to finding a well-matched job (Västra Götalands regionen, 2014:5). And in a recent OECD report about labour market integration of refugees in Germany, 40% of employers who hired refugees said they did so through the involvement of civil society initiatives such as mentorship schemes focusing on employment (OECD, 2016).

Despite these findings, and somewhat ironically, all refugees in Sweden have to use Arbetsförmedlingen's less efficient official channels as part of their *Etableringsprogram* (AF, 2017). So, what is the solution? Internal pilot project studies by AF reveal that when AF staff spend more time per refugee on one-on-one job matching and coaching sessions, they manage to compensate for refugees' lack of networks and references and avert some of the discrimination they are facing from employers, resulting in more clients in more jobs. The problem is that with the large number of refugees currently in the system, most AF employees do not have the extra time needed for each client. It is important to understand and

address these issues – not least the **discrimination** aspect, which is an evident problem in Sweden, especially for men with Arabic names. It seems difficult to root out, despite tougher legislation. In fact, even AF admits that some of their staff members use ethnic stereotypes when selecting clients for different courses, etc. (AF, 2017a; Delmi, 2015 and 2017; IFAU, 2017).

It is clear that the current Swedish integration system is highly centralised. It is run mainly by government agencies with local authorities responsible for certain aspects, sometimes in collaboration with civil society and the private sector. In **Canada**, the system is much more bottom-up, empowering and involves target groups by contracting or procuring ethnic organisations to provide social services, language training and labour-market matching for refugees and other migrants. Not so in Sweden. There are only a few regions where AF has managed to involve civil society and employers in the integration process in a concerted or formalised way (Delmi, 2017).

The experience from Norway is that immigrants who have Norwegian friends and participate in voluntary organisations have much higher employment rates than those without such networks. Estimates also show a positive connection between participation in local community activities and participation in working life. This is in line with the common knowledge among natives, that it is important to get involved in civil society organisations (CSO) to get to know people when moving to a new place in Norway. Immigrants are often not familiar with the importance of this way of bonding or networking and are under-represented in sports clubs and other civil practices (Districtssenteret.no, 2016).

**Länsstyrelsen** (2016a) in Sweden confirms the need for CSOs to get involved in order to succeed with integration and social inclusion locally. Still only approximately 25% of municipalities claim they introduce newcomers to local civil society organisations, sports clubs, etc. Up to 50% do it for young people (Länsstyrelsen 2016a). A more positive trend is the increasing demand for Länsstyrelsen's national funding for municipalities working with so-called Section 37a projects, to enhance the role of CSOs in the integration of refugees. In 2015, approximately 48 million SEK were distributed to 70 projects with 41 of these reporting good or very good results in terms of closer collaboration with CSOs. Examples of the

CSOs activities were the provision of indigenous volunteers guiding refugees into society and facilitating meeting places, sports and cultural activities in the community (2016b).

The Swedish agency for civil society and youth policy (MUCF) has also studied the role of CSOs in integration, including strategies for closer collaboration with the public sector. MUCF highlights the unique role CSOs have in enhancing social capital and inclusion through activities that involve refugees and the indigenous population alike and that use refugees as players and resources in development rather than just clients for whom agencies such as AF provide services. CSOs also give voice to marginalised groups such as unaccompanied minors and share their insights with decision-makers to improve policies and regulations (MUCF, 2016). As mentioned earlier, various pilot projects funded by **Tillväxtverket** show great benefits of involving community development groups, local businesses and sports clubs in the integration process to improve job matching (TVV, 2017). **SKL** also emphasizes the need for local and regional authorities to collaborate more closely and in a more structured way with each other, with national authorities (e.g. AF) and not least with civil society, cultural institutions and sports clubs, "to make sure different groups of citizens meet" (SKL, 2017 p.20) SKL does not explain why this beneficial collaboration is so difficult to achieve across the board, in all Swedish municipalities.

In Norway, labour costs are high and it is a big decision for small businesses to hire a new employee. Uncertainty about new employees' productivity due to foreign qualifications and varying levels of language skills make employers more reluctant to hire. Networks are therefore an important factor in the local and regional labour market and are widely used when recruiting. Personal contact with the majority population proves to be a central mechanism for finding and getting employment and immigrants with such connections have higher employment odds (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby, 2015).

In Aure (2013), a survey among highly skilled immigrants in Tromsø showed the importance of networks. Many of the participants, who had experienced difficulties entering the labour market, did not consider using the network of their Norwegian-born spouses to find employment. A network can prove helpful once migrants seem

to be sorted, leaving them short of opportunities to negotiate their skills and qualifications (Aure, 2013). Not being able to find a job according to their qualifications can lead to immigrants being over-represented in jobs that require little formal education. Almost 25% of immigrants with a higher education in a NIBR case study worked in low-skilled jobs, showing strong signs of over-qualification among immigrants. To facilitate immigrants' transition to work, better synergies between the public and private sector at regional level is needed, driven by interest and commitment. Involvement and cooperation between many different stakeholders, such as employers, NAV, the municipalities and social partners are considered necessary for developing a measure to improve the situation (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby, 2015).

Non-governmental organisations and cultural and leisure activities can provide important meeting places for immigrants and the indigenous groups can interact with them. In such arenas, immigrants have an opportunity to practise soft skills required in the regional labour market and to widen their network. Analysis shows that immigrants that have Norwegian friends and are involved in local social life have higher odds of being employed than their peers without such networks and participation (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby, 2015). Practitioners who engage and connect with people can be crucial for the community as whole, and more so if the authorities in the municipalities see and use this as a strategic tool for supporting societal development. One example is a volunteer centre (Frivilligsentralen) in Herøy municipality, established by Serbian immigrants and providing an arena for network building (Districtssenteret, 2016). Networks are not only important for employment, but can have a positive impact on other aspects of immigrants' life. Research from Denmark suggests that bonding, social ties and mutual trust within an immigrant group may facilitate the development of the immigrants' social connection to wider society (Larsen, 2011). Not being surrounded by a network of kinsmen or having the opportunity to form new family-like relations with fellow ethnics within local surroundings can seriously affect the ability of refugee families to establish a new life in Danish society (ibid, 2011).

Where humanitarian migrants struggle to secure employment after training, gradual guided entry into the labour market can be an effective

approach. Denmark's "Stepmodel" policy is an example. An integral part of Danish labour market policy gradually leads new arrivals and longer-term immigrants into regular employment via intensive language training, introduction to the workplace, and subsidised initial employment of up to one year, which can be combined with further on-the-job language training and upskilling. Similar schemes exist in various forms in Sweden. The Step-in Job Programme subsidises up to 80% of the wage costs of new arrivals for as long as two years on condition that participants attend a language training course alongside their job. One such initiative for highly skilled refugees has been running successfully since 2007 in Umeå (Umeå university, 2016).

In the Norwegian municipality of Levanger, the local authority, employers and public employment service (NAV) have been working with the adult teaching centre on developing and running a pilot scheme. It uses an intensive six-step model to ease poorly educated refugees and migrant mothers onto the labour market. To help them into lower-skilled occupations of health, cleaning and kindergartens, a curriculum has been developed jointly with professionals from those sectors. Participants are divided into smaller groups who attend training courses before moving into work placements. Other initiatives have been taken by refugees themselves, i.e. a speed-dating approach at the conference "Give a Job" in Stavanger, Kristiansand and Trondheim at the beginning of 2017. Former refugees, now citizens, felt that work-related integration was going too slow in Norway and got employers and people who had fled and ended up in Norway to meet on a speed date to see how and if they matched (Alothmann & Ngo, 2017). There are some bright examples of recent initiatives in the High-tech sector and ICT sector taken in Sweden and Finland, for example, Sync Accelerator (a Swedish private recruitment agency matching technically proficient refugees with tech jobs). Also, the Finnish Techfugees (a non-profit social enterprise) holding a newcomer boot camp, focusing on refugees with tech skills from Syria, Iraq and Somalia (Hautala, 2016).

Mentors can be useful in terms of labour market integration, although the effect in terms of a speedier path to work was difficult to measure. However, mentors cannot be bought – it's a *förtroendeuppdrag* (trust task), and requires personal engagement to serve as someone's guide and trusted referee (Delmi, 2017; AF, 2017a). An alternative to better matching services and mentors is to use labour rental services (*bemanningsföretag*). It turns out the foreign-born are over-represented in companies that hire staff out to various branches, possibly because these companies are experts in recruitment and see beyond ethnicity or names (Delmi, 2017:3; IFAU, 2017). Another interesting example is the city of Södertälje that started its own staff rental agency *Telge tillväxt*. The agency hired unemployed refugees and young people and hired them out to local companies, i.e. the agency bore the risk of employing a less qualified or less experienced person so that the companies could hire them out short-term and try them out – which often resulted in long-term contracts.

## 7.1 Mentorships

■ In Denmark and Norway, the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council run large-scale mentoring programmes, pairing humanitarian migrants with local families or individuals who help in the effort to integrate. The Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Ethnicity (KVINFO) draws on a network of 2500 mentors, focuses on women from refugee families and other migrant groups (KVINFO, 2017). Mentors can also be humanitarian migrants themselves. One example is a policeman of Afghan origin who has devoted his professional life to refugees (SVT, 21.09.2017).

■ Some examples of social partner initiatives are from Sweden, for example, where sector-based talks between employers and unions have led to schemes to fast-track refugees into a number of occupations where there is a labour shortage. The fast-track schemes include skills assessment in the workplace and publicly funded upskilling (OECD, 2016).

■ Different initiatives that have had an impact (Yrkesdörren, Yallatrappen, ISS (DK), Nordic Choice hotels I 11 Swedish cities, etc.).

## 8. Other important aspects for faster integration into the labour market

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There are other perspectives that have not been included here, but are/may possibly be crucial or relevant to consider in relation to enabling faster integration for refugees. The perspective of LMI (labour market information) and the user experience is something that we have not looked into specifically, but is of crucial importance since this is a two-way process between provider and receiver/authority and refugee/integrators and the integrated. Facilitating user influence in activation programmes: when "carers" and clerks meet pawns and queens (Djuve & Kavli, 2015).

The second perspective that is of increasing importance in the Nordic realm with the increase in challenges concerning inclusion and integration – new pedagogic models for the inclusion of adults in work life and civic society are tools to meet

those new challenges. Thirdly, honour cultures may be preventing sufficiently secure integration for women compared with men. Ways of solving this through human rights and standards of equality in Nordic countries are worth considering by including them in the integration programmes and may in the long run prove much less costly than dealing with the impacts of these challenges.

### 8.1 Factors relating to migration that affect mental health

Barriers stemming from the use of the healthcare system are manifold. They include lack of awareness and unfamiliarity with local healthcare services, fear and distrust of an unknown system and issues associated with stigma. To help refugees familiarise themselves with its health



*Picture by Mostphotos.*

system, the host country should, according to OECD (2016), systematically inform them how it works, refer them to the services they need, and supply important information in the languages of the chief countries of origin, involving community leaders, migrant groups and trained counsellors from their countries of origin, as Finland does (Pirkkalainen, Mezzeti and Guglielmo, 2013). Several studies reviewed showed that the evidence is clear when it comes to differences on mental health problems of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants compared with those of indigenous populations. Refugees and asylum seekers experience higher levels of mental and physical health problems than the general population in the host country (Fazel, Wheeler and Danesh, 2005; Gerritsen et al., 2006a). High rates of PTSD may be approximately 10 times more likely among refugees than age-matched **indigenous** populations (Fazel et al., 2005)

■ In Norway, asylum seekers have higher risk of hospitalisation due to psychiatric disorders (Iversen and Morken, 2003). In Finland, immigrants are 1.5–2 times as likely to experience depression and insomnia compared with the indigenous population (Pohjanpaää, Paananen and Nieminen, 2003) In a Swedish meta-analysis of studies comparing the mental health of refugees with that of non-refugees, a higher prevalence of mental distress among refugees is clear. Post-traumatic stress disorder and common mental disorders (including depression and anxiety) are likely to be the most common mental health problems among refugees. (Lindencrona, F., Ekblad, S. and Hauff, E., 2008). In a population study in Sweden, the economic and social disadvantage of immigrants explains the largest portion of differences in mental health between immigrants and the host country population. (Tinghög P., Hemmingsson T. and Lundberg I., 2007)

Factors causing these differences are usually those associated with social inequalities, either socio-economic, gender or age inequalities. For example:

■ In migrants from low-income to high-income countries, low socio-economic status and unemployment are among the factors increasing the rate of mental health problems (Dalgard, Sandanger and Sørensen, 1998; Lie, 2002a).

■ Immigrants from low-income countries have significantly higher psychological distress scores

than both the Norwegian-born and the immigrants from high-income countries. Dalgard, O. S., Thapa, S. B., Hauff, E., McCubbin, M. and Syed, H. R. (2006)

■ Country of origin and socio-economic status impact the severity and manifestation of psychiatric distress. For instance, when checking for lower education, employment rates and access to social resources, no significant differences were found in a study comparing mental health of Pakistani immigrants and indigenous Norwegians (Syed et al., 2006).

Resettlement stressors fall into four theoretically coherent dimensions: social and economic strain, discrimination and status loss, violence and threats in Sweden and alienation. Social and economic strain and alienation are of great significance for symptoms of common mental disorder.

■ Some studies confirm that social alienation, racial oppression and poverty are associated with psychiatric distress and disorders among immigrants (Bhui et al., 2003; Gerritsen et al., 2006b; Steel, Silove, Phan and Bauman, 2002).

■ Most available population-based studies of migration health show that women are more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and somatization symptoms (Gerritsen et al., 2006a; Thapa et al., 2007).

■ Women generally experience higher rates of PTSD and depression (Olf, Langeland, Draijer, and Gersons, 2007), and gender differences are more acute when faced with traumatic stress (Punamäki, Komproe, Qouta, El Masri and de Jong, 2005).

The refugee group most studied is the Somalis. The mental health and quality of life in the Somali group were negatively influenced by low incomes and unstable working conditions, in addition to refugee status. Similarly, research among younger Somali refugees has shown that a number of factors can increase the risk of developing mental illness, including unemployment, childhood war trauma, and drug abuse (Kroll, Yusuf and Fujiwara, 2011).

Epidemiological findings suggesting that older refugees are more vulnerable to psychological distress and suffer from a low, health-related quality of life and subjective health status as compared to the indigenous population. Secondly, past traumatic events such as military combat,



life threat, as well as killing have a lasting negative effect on mental and somatic health, as well as quality of life among older Somali refugees resettled in Finland, a relatively safe Nordic country (Mölsä et al., 2014). Disillusionment, demoralisation and depression can occur early because of migration-associated losses, or later, when initial hopes and expectations are not realised and when immigrants and their families face enduring obstacles to advancement in their new home because of structural barriers and inequalities aggravated by exclusionary policies, racism and discrimination.

Strategies to overcome those mental problems can be difficult to implement by local authorities, given the reluctance shown by immigrants, asylum seekers or refugees due to large cultural differences. For instance: the most important strategy for dealing with mental ill health seems to be the mobilisation of social networks [among immigrants, asylum seekers or refugees]. Many informants expressed their astonishment at the existence of special services for dealing with mental health and declared that, "We are all psychologists to each other." (Johnsdotter, S., Ingvarsdotter, K., Östman, M., & Carlbom, A., 2011). Most interviewees agreed that formal care, whether hospital in Somalia or psychiatric clinics in Western countries, is the last resort when all other options have failed. When it comes to milder mental ill health, the reluctance to turn to Western professionals is also a matter of clashing reference frames. (Johnsdotter, S., Ingvarsdotter, K., Östman, M. and Carlbom, A., 2011).

Experts in migrant mental health agree that, for maximum effectiveness, attention must be given to various contextual and practical issues that influence behaviour during illness, patient-physician communication and intercultural understanding. (Kirmayer, L. J. et al., 2011)

Cross-Cultural Psychological Consultancy (TPR) is a non-governmental organisation in Denmark that provides psychological counselling, treatment and social support to refugees from qualified professionals from various ethnic backgrounds and in different languages. TPR works closely with and is funded by the Danish Government. It is also actively engaged in the prevention of suicide and runs cross-cultural training courses for National Health Service staff and other groups working with refugees. In addition, TPR acts as a bridge to mainstream

health providers by explaining the Danish health system to refugees and referring them to general practitioners and specialists (tpr.dk). Denmark also has a national centre for the treatment of severely traumatised refugees which offers individual, group and family therapy to adult and child refugees with a focus on the well-being of the entire family. The centre treats patients in multidisciplinary teams of four to six professionals. Treatment covers all aspects of a refugee's life and is based on an interdisciplinary bio-psycho-social rehabilitation approach. This approach acknowledges that the various psychological, somatic and socio-economic issues faced by refugees are equally important and mutually reinforcing and cannot, therefore, be subsumed under a single diagnosis or domain of suffering (source: [umb4/dignityinstitute.dk](http://umb4/dignityinstitute.dk)). The Centre for Torture Survivors in Finland (CTSF) offers psychiatric care to refugees who have been victims of torture. Multidisciplinary teams who include professional interpreters, provide various forms of treatment to alleviate and remedy the impact of torture. The content and duration of treatment vary according to individual requirements. It is free of charge for refugees and paid for either by the local authority of the refugee's place of residence or the reception facility which referred them to the centre. The centre also offers nationwide consultation services and trains healthcare and social service professionals who work with refugees and asylum seekers who have been tortured ([www.hdl.fi/en/](http://www.hdl.fi/en/)). Centres in Sweden offering health care support specifically for refugees who have been injured during war or undergone torture are found in 13 municipalities (Helsedirektoratet, 2015). Half of them are managed by the Swedish Red Cross while the rest are run by county and regional councils (Landstingen). Some of the centres use "health communicators" who meet with newly arrived asylum seekers at reception facilities and in schools where language training is provided (Helsedirektoratet, 2015). Unaccompanied minors face particular challenges over integration. They are not the focus group of this study and will therefore not be a specific subject of the study. However, evidence from Sweden suggests that, with strong integration support, their employment prospects improve more rapidly over time than those of their peers who arrive with their parents or relatives (Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö, 2015).

## 9. Findings on effective labour market measures for refugees

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The integration of refugees is a cross-cutting issue which involves many stakeholders at regional and local level. Some regions have less experience in providing integration services than others and may benefit from sharing the experiences of those that have more long-standing policies. Some of the initiatives taken have yet to prove whether they have been effective, but in some cases, evaluations have been conducted of local pilot schemes to determine whether they are effective. OECD emphasises that countries seldom conduct evaluations of effectiveness because they are often costly and require other local authorities to act as a control group. Denmark pioneered an alternative benchmarking system approach to monitor and gauge the success of local councils in integrating refugees. Denmark tracked the effectiveness of integration tools in individual municipalities by measuring the time it took for new arrivals to become self-sufficient and enter employment or education. In Denmark's case, incentives were taken in the form of financial rewards. Municipalities receive a basic monthly subsidy for each refugee enrolled in an integration programme. This basic transfer is complemented by a reward, which is received when a refugee finds a job, enrolls in education or passes a final Danish language test (OECD, 2016).

In cases where local councils do not host enough refugees to offer courses tailored to their different needs. Norway has in some cases pooled resources with other local authorities jointly to provide more comprehensive programmes. The practice in Sweden is that small town councils in the same region can hire each other to provide language training or civic orientation as part of introductory programmes (OECD, 2016).

The Swedish integration system is highly **centralised and top-down**, while the Danish system, for example, builds on coordination between the three main pillars of municipalities, state and employers and unions. It does not include people-to-people interaction through civil society organisations, mentorships etc. Newcomers are stuck with AF's under-funded services. Not the best thing for people in need of networks and references.

The role and potential of **civil society** for integration can be researched in more detail. The cross-cutting approach is needed in particular in Sweden. All reports from AF, IFAU and Delmi focus on evaluations of public/governmental measures only, but Länsstyrelsen and MUCF has recently started to evaluate the use and role of CSOs in integration.

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P.O. Box 1658  
SE-111 86 Stockholm, Sweden  
[nordregio@nordregio.se](mailto:nordregio@nordregio.se)  
[www.nordregio.se](http://www.nordregio.se)  
[www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)

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